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Rev. T. S. Huddleston speaks at the
Congress of the People.



JULY, 1955

IN THIS ISSUE

Reports on the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE ● Full Text of the FREEDOM CHARTER ● Alex. HEPPLER, M.P., on Why the Campaign against the SENATE BILL Failed ● Nelson MANDELA on How the Transkei Bunga was Trapped into Accepting the BANTU AUTHORITIES ACT ● Phyllis Altman on AFRICAN WRITING TODAY ● Report on the SOVIET LITERARY DISCUSSIONS and a Review of "The Thaw" by EHRENBURG.

ON A NOTE OF TRIUMPH **COMMENT**

THE police allegation of "treason" has followed the Congress of the People from its beginning, to its end. It was the excuse used, almost a year ago, to explain away the first mass name-taking raid staged by the police, when the C.O.P. campaign was first organised in the Transvaal. It was the story recklessly handed out by Brigadier Rademeyr to the daily press on several occasions. And now again, when the C.O.P. was well into its second day's session and its success, despite every obstacle was clearly established, it was the charge "treason" which was to excuse the last and most desperate attempt to stultify the campaign and the Congress of the People itself. And for the last time, it failed in its purpose. Strydom's gestapo had cried "Wolf!" too often. What was intended to inspire the C.O.P. delegates with terror, inspired them only with greater certainty that their cause was right. What was intended to disrupt and interrupt the proceedings, served only to unite the delegates more closely, and spur them on to do what they had come to do by adopting a Freedom Charter which will live.

Despite the police intervention, the Congress of the People ended on a note of triumph. The delegates—disciplined, united and confident that the future is theirs—brushed the Special Branch men aside; the history of South African liberation was being made, and Major Spengler's buzzing was of as little moment as a wasp in an apple orchard. In the closing moments of the peoples' triumphant adoption of the Freedom Charter, it was they—the ordinary working men and women,—who sang and danced, victorious, inspired by the future they had helped that day to found. The police, who retired in discomfort, with thousands of copies of the Freedom Charter in their satchels, must have felt something of the strong new surge of freedom which was spread from Kliptown throughout the land. No doubt it will drive them and their masters to new frenzied efforts, to terror and intimidation to stop the surge. But at Kliptown the tide turned. Today it is running in the way of freedom. Not all the raids, bans and provocations of these Special Branch Canutes can stop it.

THERE were several signs to the sensitive observer at the C.O.P. that the liberation movement in South Africa has come of age. Not just the self-confidence and maturity displayed by every delegate in the face of police provocation; but other things, straws in the wind. There were the many delegates wearing national costume—not of the old tribal days—but of the new age of liberation, whose colours have been taken from the flag of the Congress movement—green for the fields, gold for the mineral wealth, and black for the majority of the people. There were the youth, representatives of a new generation for liberty, also proudly wearing the Congress colours. And there was the

new award, the "Isitwalandwe," conferred on Chief Luthuli, Father Huddleston and Dr. Dadoo.

The Isitwalandwe award marks the emergence of the Congress movement from the days when it was a sect, struggling for recognition; today it is a great nationwide movement, speaking for more South Africans of all races than any other body in our history.

"Isitwalandwe" is a title conferred by the Congress movement on those who have made outstanding contributions to the cause of liberty. Its first three recipients were selected neither on grounds of race, nor of Province, nor of position they might have held. It is, perhaps, a striking illustration of the non-racial character of the liberation movement that the first three to receive this award are from three different racial groups. But they were chosen because they have earned the award by their service to the people, without consideration of their race.

They are the first. But they will not be the last to carry the proud title of "Isitwalandwe." There are others who have done much to earn the tribute of their fellow men. Doubtless, in the future, the Congress movement will recognise their services. And there will be many more rank and file Congress workers, fighters for liberty, who will win the award by outstanding service in the future. These are the real South African heroes—heroes of the people. No one who holds liberty precious can want to see this title cheapened, handed out like Knighthoods to jam manufacturers who subscribe heavily to party funds, awarded on the basis of petty provincialism, or distributed like Strydom senatorships. "Isitwalandwe" must be won; and today these three who are first to bear it, have won it, with honour.

FATE and the weather, which certainly smiled on the Congress of the People, gave a more-than-chilly reception to the women marchers who camped in the grounds of Union Buildings on the coldest night of the year, to protest at the Senate Bill. Theirs was a brave showing. The Senate Bill can be fought, and beaten. But not on the basis on which Strauss spars; not by the White voters alone and unaided; not by side-stepping the real issue of voting rights for Non-Europeans and shadow-boxing with the

BY WAY OF CONTRAST

CONTENTS: Comment, page 2. Alfred Hutchinson on the Congress of the People, page 3. "Time is Running out," by A. Hepple, M.P., page 5. Bluffing the Bunga into Apartheid, by Nelson Mandela, page 6. The Freedom Charter, page 8. "A Sweet Jube-Jube called Joobie Abrahams, by Phyllis Altman, page 10. Forced Labour in Angola, page 11. First Fruits of Bandung, by Desmond Buckle, page 12. In Basutoland, by Arnold Selby, page 13. Literary Stock-Taking in the Soviet Union, page 14. Review of "The Thaw," by Ehrenburg, page 15.

unreal phantom of "the spirit of the Constitution;" not by accepting the basic Nationalist premise that Non-White citizens are voiceless mutes, and that the "volks-wil" is expressed every five years in minority, all white elections. This way lies disaster.

In case the brave but unavailing protest against the Senate Bill did not founder of its own accord, Mr. Strauss bestirred himself to scuttle it. Pressed to the wall by Nationalist M.P.'s the "Leader of the Opposition" announced, in some twenty wordy sentences, that if the United Party ever returns to power it will think over its position and decide whether it will restore Coloured voters to the common voting roll. Or not, as the case may be. In all his brave band, only nine M.P.'s summoned up enough backbone to protest, "on principle." Two days later, the brave band had reduced itself to one; the others were "satisfied" by the second Strauss pronouncement: the United Party, if it ever regains power, would consult with the Coloured people to find out whether it could undo the injustice which has been done them. Only Dr. Friedman's dissenting

voice declared clearly that the Coloured people should be restored to the common voting roll as soon as possible. For his trouble, the lone man of principle in the U.P. caucus has been expelled.

Where do they go from here, all those who fought the Senate Bill, only to be brought down by a low blow from the "official opposition?" For them there is food for thought in the new way forward to democratic victory which was opened by the C.O.P. and the Freedom Charter, at the very moment that the Governor General's signature sealed the disaster of the campaign against the Senate Bill. It may be strong meat for them to swallow, this creed of equal rights, opportunities and freedoms for all South Africans. But the best of them—those who hold democratic principles higher than the United Party caucus—will come to understand it, and to support the campaign for the Freedom Charter. The disaster of their present campaign will open the eyes of some. Others will be led to new defeats and new disasters by Mr. Strauss and his Party, before they too join the people in their real march—the march to freedom as it is described in the Freedom Charter.

ALFRED HUTCHINSON reports on the historic Congress of the People which adopted the Freedom Charter

"A New World Unfolds . . ."

THEY came in their thousands — from the cities, towns, villages, farms and faraway kraals. They came in buses, lorries, motor cars and trains. They came in all colours; they came in all ages. Ministers, factory workers, farms labourers, drivers, business men, students, doctors, teachers, clerks, workers in the kitchens . . . The call that had been made many months ago was being answered; the call that ran through the length and breadth of our vast land. The call of the people of South Africa to meet together, to speak together, and together decide how they wanted to live, was being answered.

For the first time in the history of our country, the people have met—not as Black and White—but as "equals, countrymen and brothers." They have met under the wheel of the Congress of the People, the wheel which spanned racial considerations and proclaimed the unity of the people and their common desires.

The national anthem swept upwards, carried by strong resolute voices. The voice of the absent Chief Luthuli filled the gathering, pointing the way forward—the way to the future South Africa. It told of the wrong foundations of the Union of South Africa; the foundations of inequality and injustice and the harrowing inheritance of the people of South Africa.

The Congress of the People met under the sheltering wing of the people of the world. Messages of friendship and support spanned seas and crossed high mountains; brotherly hands outstretched in support for the people in their struggle for liberation. For who does not know the urge for freedom—the passion that has haunted mankind; the passion that has always opened new worlds?

The presentation of the *Isitwalandwe* were moving. The people of South Africa meeting as one were conferring the highest distinction on the people who have served them well. *Isitwalandwe*—the wearer of the feather of the rare bird, almost unknown—legendary almost; the feather worn by the heroes of the people. South Africa knows her heroes.

But of the three people to receive the award only Father Huddleston could be present. Dr. Dadoo and Chief Luthuli, the banned leaders of the people, were absent. Chief Luthuli was in distant Groutville but his spirit was with the people and the people had him in their hearts. You cannot banish a leader from the people. He sent his daughter, Albertina, to receive the award on his behalf.

Father Huddleston stood before the people as he had done many times. For years he had fought with them. For years they had tramped the difficult road together. The people loved him as he loved them.

In many minds there will always remain the picture of the frail, white-haired woman in a sari, standing under the ox-wagon wheel of the Congress of the People. She was Dr. Dadoo's mother and she was receiving the *Isitwalandwe* on behalf of her son. The mother of a hero, standing before the people, brought tears in many eyes.

**The full text of the FREEDOM CHARTER
adopted at the Congress of the People is
printed on pages 8 and 9.**

Three thousand men and women met together at Kliptown, Johannesburg, on the 25th and 26th June, 1955. They had been sent by their fellow-men to speak for them. Now the Freedom Charter was being read, the Charter that had been drawn up by the people. For months demands had been flowing in. The people had spoken of hunger, poverty and ignorance; of the police that broke into homes at the dead of night; of pass raids and prisons and farm gaols; they had spoken of the slums in which they live . . . The things in their lives have been discussed and now they decide that these things must end.

The call that had swept through the vast land, from corner to corner, became alive. The people had answered the call and now they were giving it back. It would ring from city to city, from town to town and find its way back to the kraals. The people have spoken; they have spoken in one strong voice.

At night when the people had left, the wheel hung in the night. A few fires burnt and volunteers tramped the area guarding it. But the spirit of the afternoon was still there persisting like the demands of the people who would again meet in the morning. Songs of freedom continued to be heard deep into the night.

At nine o'clock the representatives of the people were back at their business. The words of the Charter rang clear and unequivocally: "South Africa belongs to the people who live in it, black and white . . ." South Africa had ceased to be the country of one group of the people — it belonged to all. No government could justly claim authority unless it was based on the will of all the people. The people declared that they had been robbed "of their birthright to land liberty and peace." The people declared that their country would never be prosperous or free until "our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities. And the people rising to sing the national anthem sealed the covenant to "strive together," until the democratic changes set out in the Charter were won.

A new world, a brave new world was unfolding itself. In the new South Africa the people shall govern; the national groups shall have equal rights; the people shall share in the country's wealth; the land shall be shared among those who work it; all shall be equal before the law; all shall enjoy equal human rights; there shall be work and security . . .

There was movement in the crowd. The police had arrived. The people stood together, refused to be provoked. The police trooped to the platform. Mounted police sat on champing horses and cordons of armed police were thrown round the gathering. The police were investigating a charge of treason. The people burst into song and silently sat down.

What treason was there to uncover when the people declared their aims to the country and the entire world to know? Was it treason for the people to meet and speak together? Was it treason to demand food and clothes, plenty and security? Was it treason to demand the brotherhood and equality of all men irrespective of

*"What art thou Freedom? O! could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand—tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery;
For the labourer thou art bread
And a comely table spread
From his daily labour come
In a neat and happy home.
Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude—
No—in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.
. . . Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free . . ."*

P. B. SHELLEY

race or colour? Was it treason to work for peace among all mankind? There was nothing to conceal and the Conference continued as the police stood watch.

The new South Africa unfolded once more — the South Africa the police seemed to hate and fear: The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened; there shall be houses, security and comfort; there shall be peace and friendship. Dusk was gathering when the adoption of the Charter came to an end. The children who had sung "Away with Bantu Education" were silent. Their demand had been answered.

The people of South Africa had met; the largest and most representative assembly of the people had taken place. The Freedom Charter had been drawn up and now the delegates would take it back to the people who had sent them.

In the gloom the police looked like some sentinels of lost ramparts; the representatives of an age that had gone. They insulted the people; they spat in women's faces; they slashed the peace exhibition, completely ruining it; they pointed guns at peaceful people . . . The band struck the songs of the people and the people joined in song. They danced together and were glad together. The people cannot know fear—people who have pledged themselves to fight together in the non-violent struggle of the people cannot know fear.

The Freedom Charter has been drawn up. Another milestone has been reached on the road to freedom. Thanks to the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation and the South African Congress of Democrats for having sponsored the greatest assembly of the people of South Africa. The Congress of the People must give momentum to the struggle for liberation and the fruits of it will fall to the organisations which brought it to its happy culmination. The people have spoken.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

**ALEX. HEPPLER, M.P.,
ON THE SENATE BILL**

FOR FOUR YEARS the Nationalists have been trying to find a way to remove the Coloured voters of the Cape from the common roll. Their latest device is to pack the Senate and so secure the necessary two-thirds majority of both Houses of Parliament.

In place of the existing Chamber of 48 Senators (30 Government, 14 Opposition and 4 Native Representatives), they have created a bigger but less representative one. The Senate Act provides for a chamber of 89 members (77 Government, 8 United Party and 4 Native Representatives), with considerably reduced powers.

Prior to the introduction of the Senate Bill, Parliament passed the Appellate Division Quorum Act, fixing a quorum of eleven judges to hear all appeals on the validity of acts of parliament. This means that any appeal on the validity of the Senate Act will be heard by this new court. Flowing from these two acts, the next step will be a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament to pass a law removing the Cape Coloured voters from the common roll.

Like the High Court of Parliament Bill, the Senate Bill was a most outrageous piece of gerrymandering. It was not only an attack upon the coloured vote, but an attack upon parliament itself. It revealed the cynical contempt of the Nationalists towards democratic institutions as well as their despotic determination to bend the nation to their will.

A measure of this kind should have aroused the forces of the parliamentary opposition to unite all democratically-minded people in mighty demonstrations of protest. The electorate, until then still apathetic because of the 1953 election defeat and the subsequent dissension in the opposition ranks, stirred once again and showed themselves ready and willing to respond to hold leadership.

Unfortunately, the party which held the initiative, the United Party, decided to go it alone. Afraid of becoming entangled in embarrassing alliances, they sought to steal the show by converting public protests into United Party rallies, at which to enrol members and raise party funds. It is no wonder that, instead of a sustained and resolute campaign, there were sporadic activities which soon petered out and the first great enthusiasm of the people quickly wore off.

Generous and flattering press publicity for the U.P. effort have sought to give the impression of great activity everywhere. But the fact remains that real enthusiasm is sadly lacking, because the public has sensed that all the meetings, demonstrations and petitions had a narrow purpose. And so, outside parliament, a great opportunity was lost.

Inside parliament, matters were even worse. A splendid Second Reading fight against the Senate Bill was spoiled by the subsequent curious tactics of the U.P. After the Labour Party had exposed the fact that, besides its other evils, the Senate Bill could prevent a party successful at the polls from governing, the United Party rushed in with an amendment. The Labour Party considered that the sinister feature which they had uncovered was just another good reason why the Bill should be killed. By offering a way out, the U.P. saved the Government's

face. Relieved at seeing the drastic U.P. amendment, which proposed the dissolution of Provincial Councils, the Government gratefully offered its own, which merely reduced the powers of its own packed Senate. Naturally, the U.P. was compelled to abandon its amendment and offer excuses for submitting it. But worse was to follow.

In righteous indignation, the U.P. leaders condemned the new Senate as a "monstrosity," "a place where no self-respecting man would be particularly anxious to sit," "a House of Frauds," "not only a House of dupes and stooges, but a sort of political harem of politically emasculated yes-men," "a powerless and superfluous body."

Did this condemnation, expressed in these contemptuous appellatives, make the Senate untouchable, something to be avoided like the plague? No. The U.P. could see no good reason why they should not accept their miserable quota of "dupes and stooges" in this "House of Frauds." The U.P. leadership recoiled in horror at the suggestion that they should boycott this "monstrosity," this "harem of politically emasculated yes-men."

To the man in the street, the obvious way to treat this fraud Senate is to boycott it. But the U.P. has decided to send its eight Senators from Natal, explaining that "as a responsible Opposition, the U.P. dares not increase the number of decent Nationalists who may be required to upset the Government's iniquitous plans; secondly, it is essential that every platform available to it must be used by the U.P.; and, finally, a decision to boycott the Senate will place the representatives of the Natives in an invidious position."

Has the U.P. overlooked the fact that the 77 Nationalist senators are being sent to perform the specific act of providing the Government with a two-thirds majority? To suggest that any of them can be persuaded to vote the other way is ridiculous. In their apparent concern for the Native Representatives have they forgotten that they refused to escort any of these members into the Senate or the Assembly at the beginning of the Session? Cannot the U.P. realise that by sharing in the new Senate they will be attiring it in the robes of responsibility. By electing all eight senators from Natal will not the U.P. be guilty of the very crime of which they accuse the Nationalists—completely denying representation to all other parties in the Province?

Amidst the confusion of party politics, the Senate Bill came as a clear-cut issue which revealed the true face of baaskap Nationalism. The people were ready to fight. But the Nationalists were never put on the defensive. A great opportunity was lost because of the opportunism and blundering tactics of the U.P. leaders.

It might not have been so bad if they had harmed only themselves. Unfortunately they have demoralised their own members and supporters and frustrated the anti-nationalist forces throughout the land.

The Nationalists are jubilantly riding on the crest of a wave, reckless in their confidence as they go forward. Time is running out for the parliamentary opposition. Unless they really begin fighting and resisting the Nationalists very soon, South Africa will become a one-party state by their default.

BLUFFING THE BUNGA INTO APARTHEID

By **NELSON MANDELA**

THE acceptance of the Bantu Authorities Act by the Transkei Bunga raises serious problems for the peoples and the freedom movement of our country. The act is intended to rebuild tribal rule, and to divert the struggle for freedom into narrower channels. It will tend to hold back the impact of new and fresh ideas and will give rise to parochial tendencies, internal conflict and communal strife among the people.

In time the government hopes to succeed in breaking the African people into communities of small, isolated and hostile tribal units, unable to offer united and effective resistance to the reactionary policies of the Government.

If the people are not enlightened on the evils of this act and the dangerous implications of the Bunga decision, the government might succeed in inveigling others in the country to accept other such tribal authorities, and united political and labour fronts of all races and workers will be difficult to achieve. The success of Nationalist policies here could deprive the people of effective organisation at a time when the Nationalists are rallying all their forces to strike even more fatal blows at the liberation movement.

The New Deception

Those who accepted the Bantu Authorities Act in the Transkei argued the Bunga's jurisdiction was limited and ineffectual, and that Africans would get greater powers to govern themselves from the new Bantu authorities.

It is true that the act gives the impression of greater autonomy for tribal authorities in the areas of their jurisdiction. But this is only a surface impression, for even this limited local autonomy is subject to the overriding authority of numerous petty Government officials over whom the chiefs have no control and the Act reserves enormous discretionary powers for the Government.

There can be no doubt that the government will tolerate "independence" from the Bantu authorities only so long as they conform to official policy.

It is a completely specious argument to pretend that Bantu Authorities should be supported because the Bunga system is limited and ineffectual. If the Government is so keen on transferring real power to the Transkei people, why not to the existing Bunga, is the very pertinent question one must ask.

The vital fact is that both the Bunga and the tribal authorities envisaged under the new act are creations of the government intended to deceive the people into believing that they have an effective voice in their own government and to discourage them from forming their own independent organisations. "Why bother with these undignified organisations of poor and illiterate people, of agitators and mischief-makers when the Government has

kindly set up such a modern institution for us," is the type of reaction the government hopes to get from chiefs and petty officials in the reserve areas.

Neither the Bunga nor the Bantu Authorities can really serve the interests of the people, for both are intended primarily to deny, and not to promote, the normal growth and advancement of the African people towards political emancipation, and the government will disperse the Bantu Authorities, as it has the Bunga, as soon as they show intransigence to state policies and schemes.

Reversion to tribal rule and the confining of the political rights of a community to the non-essential matters of local administration is the very opposite of self-government. The people of the Territories, as of all other areas, will win political power by struggling through their own independent organisations which embrace all the oppressed people of South Africa. Theirs must be a policy of unity, and not tribal division, one of demanding full and equal rights, not the right to help in administering apartheid.

It is interesting to recall that the Bunga resolution of 1952 rejected the Bantu Authorities Act. This was at the beginning of the defiance campaign, one of whose objectives was the repeal of this very act, and the Bunga resolution was taken at the zenith of the widespread campaign among the people of the Territories for the defeat of the Rehabilitation Scheme.

Buying the Chiefs Over

Why, now in 1955, this capitulation in the Transkei to the government's plan for Bantu authorities?

The reasons must be sought in the relationship between the chiefs and the government, and in the tactics of Dr. Verwoerd and his Native Affairs Department in this apartheid episode.

As is well-known, every chief and headman is appointed and paid by the government. It is their duty to carry out the policy of the government, for they are part of its apparatus of Government, and are directly responsible to it. Failure or refusal to carry out orders, association with the peoples' movements and the expression of views which correspond with the aspirations and demands of the people, have very often been visited with drastic departmental action. Chief A. J. Luthuli, president-general of the African National Congress, was deposed when he defied the government ultimatum to resign from the Congress. Chief Sibasa in the Transvaal, Chief Mopeli of Witziesshoek and many others were either deposed or exiled when they refused to collaborate with the government in the implementation of its schemes, and when they identified themselves with the struggles of the people against such schemes.

Last year the government held big Indabas for the chiefs of the Transvaal and Zululand on the whole their overtures received sharp rebuffs. More and more

the government has been resorting to open intimidation and has directed the chiefs, on pain of severe departmental action, to support the setting up of tribal authorities or forfeit their positions.

Some chiefs have shown exemplary courage and determination in the face of this intimidation, but there are many who have put their tails between their legs and capitulated.

Many who have been won over have said publicly that they believe the Bantu Authorities Act will confer on them increased powers, and certainly they hope that towing the government's line will bring them higher status.

In the period preceeding the discussion of the Bantu Authorities in the Bunga the government did everything to foster this belief. So, just prior to the Bunga resolution chiefs throughout the country were given increased criminal and civil jurisdiction over their tribal subjects (this under the latest amendment to the Native Administration Act), a bribe if anything was, to get them to support Bantu authorities.

The Big Bluff

Then the debate of the Act by the Bunga was timed to coincide with the announcement by the Secretary for Native Affairs that the capital of the Transkei, Umtata, was a "white spot," and its European inhabitants would, in time, have to pack and go. This announcement fostered the illusion among Africans of the Territories that they were on the threshold of a new era in which they would be given full control of their own affairs.

The announcement that Umtata as a "white town" was only temporary, roused the Europeans of the Transkei to violent protest. They performed an invaluable function in the Transkei, they said. In times of starvation they sold the African mealies on credit, and made advances to them to enable them to proceed to the mines. They did not, of course, mention the ruthlessness with which the traders of the Transkei exploit the people through the scandalous practice of buying their grain at ridiculously low prices, and selling the same maize back to them at fantastic prices during starvation periods. In any case, the hostility and opposition to the "White spot removal scheme" was coloured by the racialism of this trading community and clouded by their own selfish interests. They have not grasped that the only way to remove the threats to their own security is to renounce race prejudice and sectionalism and join with the down-trodden people of the Territories in the fight against Nationalist apartheid.

While the clamour from the Whites of the Transkei was still in full swing, and barely after two months after the Bunga had been ensured to vote for its own abolition, the Minister of Native Affairs issued a statement which, in effect, was a repudiation of the announcement made earlier by his Secretary of Native Affairs.

In the House of Assembly Dr. Verwoerd said that if the Africans wished to have White spots removed from their territories they must bear the onus. The whole process would depend on "the natural development of the Natives, and if they could not get on without them, the White spots would remain." The disappearance of the White spots would depend on the Africans being able

to develop so that they could do without these guardians.

Here was political intrigue, deception and double-talk at its most sophisticated. Apartheid will be carried out when Africans can do without their "guardians," but everything the Nationalists do is calculated to prevent the African people being able to dispense with European suzerainty even in their "own areas." The Minister also knows very well that the removal of the so-called "White spots" is far beyond the resources of the African community, impoverished by his policies. The promise of apartheid they can have, but they must themselves pay for its reality! Verwoerd succeeded in neatly trapping the Bunga into acceptance of tribal authorities, on the grounds that these are the positive gains of apartheid, only to declare then that if apartheid collides with vested White interests in the African areas, it will not be applied.

Apartheid for the Territories has been exposed as a gigantic fraud but to far too many in the Transkei, Verwoerd's exposure of his own scheme came too late to prevent them being seduced into acceptance of Bantu authorities. The latter is part of a deliberate bluff visited upon the people, to deceive the credulous and to lull the unsuspecting into the belief that they have a voice in their own government.

The Bunga acceptance of the Bantu Authorities Act in principle (though the Bunga has appointed a recess committee to consider how to integrate the Bunga system and the Act) points to certain grave problems in the liberation movement. For one thing, it shows that propaganda on the true meaning and aim of Nationalist plans has not made much impact on the Territories. It also compels us to ask ourselves whether previous decisions in regard to the boycott of statutory bodies were correct. Has the boycott resolution not been weighed and found wanting? Will participation in these bodies not serve as a means of maintaining connection and contact with the great masses of the people in the Reserves? Should these bodies not be used as platforms to expose the policies of the Nationalist Government, and to win the people over to the liberation movement? These are vital issues which are widely discussed today in the peoples' organisations.

AN ENGLISH SCHOOLMASTER from the Kikuyu country told the Royal African Society that the Mau Mau is more than sheer gangsterism. It is a national resistance movement which many Africans deplore but would never betray to a white man . . . Mr. Francis claims that it is just as important that the battle be "clean as victorious." Unfortunately, the battle now being waged by the Colony's security forces is not always "clean." Confessions from African suspects, he said, are often obtained by acts of deliberate brutality which no Christian could approve of. Such tactics would not destroy the Mau Mau movement. It had to be destroyed by removing things like the European's attitude of superiority, the shortage of farming land in the highlands, low wages, and poor housing conditions.

"The Manchester Guardian." April 1, 1955.

THE FREEDOM CHARTER

**ADOPTED AT THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE AT
KLIPTOWN, JOHANNESBURG, ON JUNE 25 AND 26, 1955.**

WE, the People of South Africa declare for all our country and the world to know :

- that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;
- that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;
- that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;
- that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together — equals, countrymen and brothers — adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

ALL NATIONAL GROUPS SHALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!

Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

ALL SHALL BE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW !

No one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial;

No one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;

The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

ALL SHALL ENJOY EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS !

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad;

Pass Laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

THERE SHALL BE WORK AND SECURITY !

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND OF CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;

Higher education and technical training, shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

THERE SHALL BE HOUSES, SECURITY AND COMFORT !

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space to be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no-one shall go hungry;

A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state;

Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all;

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed.

THERE SHALL BE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP !

South Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations;

South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation — not war;

Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all;

The people of the protectorates—Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland—shall be free to decide for themselves their own future;

The right of all the peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close co-operation.

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here : "THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY."

"A SWEET JUBE-JUBE CALLED JOOBIE ABRAHAMS"

By PHYLLIS ALTMAN

THOSE White South Africans who believe that the African is naive, rural and simple will receive a distinct shock on finding that his favourite reading matter is sophisticated to the *nth* degree of Western culture — consisting of "nite-life," beauty contests, pin-ups, fiction, sport, jazz, books, crime, comics, advice to the love-lorn, together with informative and often startling political commentaries.

In an assessment of these publications produced mainly by Africans for Africans, one must begin with *Drum* — the publication which is read avidly from Cape Town to Accra. The political articles in *Drum*, particularly in connection with the African National Congress, have already been discussed in *Fighting Talk*, but mention must be made of an excellent series of exposures of the oppressive and brutal side of white trusteeship as experienced by the African "wards." Two outstanding articles in this series were "Mr. Drum Goes to Gaol" and "I Worked on Snyman's Farm" — and one must pay tribute to the tremendous personal courage of "Mr. Drum" who undertakes these hazardous assignments.

Another good feature is "Masterpieces in Bronze" which deals with leading Non-European personalities, both here and abroad — political leaders, writers, artists, singers and others. These articles must be a source of gratification to the Africans whose opportunity to contribute to the cultural life of South Africa is restricted and whose achievements are for the most part ignored.

It was *Drum* and the *Golden City Post* which gave the "inside" story of the sensational closing of Fort Hare and which were correct in assessing this incident as intimidation of the students, as the screening for re-admission now reveals.

However, this assessment is concerned primarily with the scope which *Drum* and the other publications offer to African journalists and short story writers and which play an increasingly important part in moulding African reading tastes. Here the picture is disturbing, for the emphasis is on sex and sadism, on "slick" writing, with cheap Americanisms.

There has been a deterioration, for in earlier issues of *Drum* there were stories which were the serious efforts of Non-White writers to produce work of a high literary standard. But this type of story has become an exception. The majority deal with crime, violence, illicit love, gambling and drinking, and however well-written they may be it seems that a story must have a high sex, liquor and crime content in order to secure publication in *Drum* or *Africa!* (*Drum's* sister magazine).

Our South African society is a violent one, Non-White citizens are subjected daily to violation of their dignity if not of their persons, and it may be argued that these stories are the product of the writer's environment. They are nothing of the sort. There is growing up a literature, not of protest and revolt, but of sordid escapism. I imagine that serious writers will turn out "pot-boilers" for *Drum* to make money and reserve their literary efforts for publication overseas, if possible, as there is no South African market for short stories of merit.

Closely linked to the themes of the fiction is the series of articles on crime which are a feature of *Drum* and *Africa!* This is perhaps the most disturbing feature of these publications. Like all literature of this type, the ostensible reason for publication is to show that "crime does not pay." In effect, however, the criminal is glorified, and more important, the reader is insidiously accustomed to brutality, sadism and violence. The tone of these articles is matter-of-fact, and pictures of the gangsters in family groups (conventional, like ordinary people) make reader-identification with the "hero" an easy matter. The articles are on a par with the horror comics published in America where stories of stabbing, whipping, murdering, plundering, torturing are fed in daily doses to the children.

I find absolutely nothing to commend *Africa!* In *Drum*, the sex and sadism are to a certain extent offset by the political articles and other feature articles, but in *Africa!* which is labelled "Fun for Everyone," sex, passion and crime are all pervading. Here is an analysis of the contents for May, 1955.

Fiction

The Tree, by R. M. Triegaardt. A story about a character called "Chico" who "can always be depended upon to tell an interesting tale or two about 'cherrys' and guys, and especially about 'cherrys'." This is a la Damon Runyon and is about a robbery which nets "Chico" six months in gaol.

Money from Moscow, by Arthur Mogale. A detective (sic) story a la James Hadley Chase and Mickey Spillane. "I go down to the Cape for a no-woman, no-booze holiday. But a sweet jube-jube called Jobie Abrahams hooks me and leads me to a lousy wrestling match where a boyo is 'accidentally' killed . . ." This story is, to me, quite incomprehensible.

String along with me!, by Moses Motsisi. A sexy love story with a murder by a maniac. "I killed her. Now I'm going to kill you too. I'm going to kill everyone of you." "She clung madly on to him while he fondled the soft, pouting swellings that were her billows(??)"

Subway to Jamaica, by Langston Huges. One of the "Simple" stories but the extract is too short to convey the true flavour.

Articles

My Son was a Gangster, by the mother of Garret Adams (whose dramatic life of crime was featured in *Drum*.)

Germiston's Notorious Fast Eleven Gang. "Those who live by the sword must die by the sword." "There was Manual. He was dark, stubborn, cruel, daring. He was their chief knife-man. Then there was Shorty, a nice-looking fellow . . . Then Mickey, stubborn and full of guts . . ." and so on, ad nauseam.

(Continued on next page)

A practical step towards providing African children with a real alternative to Bantu Education has been taken by the magazine *Drum*. Starting this month it intends to publish, in each issue, a special feature for children, which, it is said, will help them and also those parents who wish to take a hand in educating their own children.

AN AMERICAN TRAVELLER WRITES ON FORCED LABOUR IN ANGOLA

IN ANGOLA, adjoining the Belgian Congo on the southwest, there seems to be much more of a working assimilation policy than in any other section of Africa I visited. The population of Angola is about 4½ million, of which about 90,000 are white and 30,000 are mulatto. On the streets of Luanda and Lobito I saw African, mulatto and white children playing together on occasion. In a few cafes in downtown areas I saw non-white men eating along with Europeans.

On the other hand, there are no political rights for anyone. Real colonial administration is from Europe. There are no elections and no legislature.

Immigration is encouraged. Many of the Portuguese who are settling in Angola are very poor. They run competition for jobs with the African. Angola was the only country north of South Africa where I saw no African taxi drivers. White population has risen spectacularly, going up more than 75% between 1940 and 1950.

(Continued from previous page)

Fashion

Pretty Goes with Plain, by Johnny Seboni. "This Swan Song was a petite chick who walked into the office today . . . And, boy, she looked real hotcha." The article concludes with this remarkable piece of advice to woman: "Take a tip and get yourself a girl uglier than yourself to go out with. And then the boys will look at you."

There are one or two reasonably written articles, a page of household hints, a fair article on "Show Biz," a meaningless six-page photographic story, a "cow-punching trigger-girl" from Johannesburg, several pin-ups and advice to the love-lorn. The general impression which this magazine gives is of a poor imitation of cheap paper-back writing at its worst. If readers are cultivating a taste for this type of writing it is a deplorable state of affairs.

Zonk is not associated with *Drum* and *Africa!* and though its lay-out and features are similar to *Drum* it has been out-stripped in circulation by its livelier rival. There are illustrated feature article on subjects less explosive than those chosen by

Portuguese "Contract" Labour

A phase of life in Angola about which an outsider has heard more speculation than about any other thing before entering the country is the so-called contract labour system. It is not too easy to get accurate information about this system. It must be remembered that Angola does not pretend to be a democracy. There are many things which I should like to report which I do not feel free to discuss in writing at this point. Angola probably could be fairly described as a police state, more so than any other place I visited.

The contract system is not slave labour in the ordinary sense. It really amounts to labour conscription, except that it is not applied on a universal basis. Only the unassimilated Africans are picked up. The basis of the system is the need for labourers — in the factories, the mines, the farms, the construction gangs, the roads, etc.

The African villages have the available labour supply. The reasoning of the officials, as I was told by a

Drum, social pages, beauty queens, articles on sculptors, singers and musicians. This is a periodical which I have not read regularly, but my impression is that it is sober, a little dull and that the standard of the fiction is not very high.

The fact that these publications flourish and are so widely read indicates that there is a tremendous hunger for reading matter among Africans, though they do not constitute the only readers. These magazines, too, are practically the only medium open to the African journalist and short-story writer. It is, therefore, extremely unfortunate that *Drum* and *Africa!* in particular, should encourage cheap and sensationl writing, so that Africans are forced to adopt this style if they want their work published. If the retort is: "This is what our readers want," the position is doubly unfortunate for it means that the readers have been given a taste for this type of writing. It is a pity too, that *Drum* will accept contributions from Non-White writers only and excludes White writers. With a change of policy *Drum* could play an important role in fostering a true, multi-racial, South African literature

regional administrator, is that the Africans are lazy and if they are not put to work they will simply stagnate in their villages and spend their time getting drunk. Therefore the government conscripts African labourers. The system is called "contract" labour because the government makes a contract with an employer to supply a given number of workers at such and such a wage for a stated period.

The period of service varies from as short as three months to five years. The employers pay the government about two dollars a month for the worker. At the end of the contract the government gives the accumulated money to the worker minus the government tax amounting to about seven dollars a year. The employer must supply his contract labour with clothing, food and housing.

Midnight Raids

This conscription system is not applied along neat legal lines from the point of view of the African. In the village, any African boy over 16 can be picked up at a moment's notice and taken for his term of service. The fact that he may already have been in contract does not mean he may not be taken again. The lowest Portuguese administrative official is called the *chef de post*. He has to meet a quota of labourers. One such *chef* said he had to supply 25 a month. It is quite usual that villages will be "raided" in the middle of the night when the men are sure to be at home. The labourers thus picked up are taken to the jail for the night and sent the next day to their place of work, which can be any place in Angola. I visited a number of African villages and made a point of asking in each one how many men were on contract. In one village of a population of perhaps 150, thirty men were on contract. Imagine what this system does to the social structure of an African village — a family broken, a piece of land left entirely in the hands of the women to till, the insecurity of not knowing when the police may arrive, etc. The official government figures for 1951 put the number of contract labourers at 155,000. Figures for 1953 I saw quoted elsewhere put the number at over 300,000.

FIRST FRUITS OF BANDUNG

By
DESMOND BUCKLE

TOWARDS the end of May the Egyptian Minister of National Guidance, Major Salah Salem, announced in Cairo that Egypt and the Sudan have reached agreement in the distribution of the Nile waters "on a satisfactory and fair basis."

This agreement, which accords with the national interests of both Egypt and the Sudan, resulted from talks between Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian Prime Minister, and Ismael El Azhari, the Sudanese Premier, on their return from the historic Bandung Conference of Asian and African states.

Only a few days before this conference was due to take place negotiations in Cairo between representatives of Egypt and the Sudan on a revision of the 1929 Nile Waters Agreement broke down in an atmosphere of mutual recriminations.

Anticipating continued failure of the effort to work out a satisfactory settlement between the parties in this matter, *The Economist* (April 16, 1955) wrote: "Egypt's one real way of salvation lay in the continuance of British control (in the Sudan) safeguarding its vital interests, but instead it preferred systematically (and in the end effectively) to intrigue for the dissolution of British control before alternative guarantees could be devised and made effective."

However, Colonel Nasser and Ismael El Azhari, fresh from Bandung, got together in the spirit that that conference had engendered and reached rapid agreement. Thus the first fruits of the Bandung Conference are already being gathered in Africa.

SHARING THE NILE

As is well known the River Nile is of vital importance to both Egypt and the Sudan. And hitherto the sharing of its waters had been dictated by Britain by virtue of her dominance over both Egypt and the Sudan. In this way the Nile became not a river in which Egyptians and Sudanese have a common interest, but one for the possession of whose waters they were in rivalry.

The rapid increase in the Egyptian population since the war has made the country more than ever dependent on the Nile for expanding her agriculture in order to be able to feed her growing millions. At the same

time the needs of the Sudan in this respect have also become much greater.

With the sharp development in the post war years of the nationalist movements in both countries, British imperialism saw the separation of the Sudan from Egypt and the use of the Nile for the purpose of exerting economic pressure on Egypt as constituting the chief hope for its survival in the Nile Valley.

It was for this reason that the British authorities in the Sudan gave their active support to certain sections of the Sudanese feudal hierarchy and their followers concentrated in the Umma Party and encouraged them to raise the demand for "independence" from both Britain and Egypt. Imperialist circles hoped that with the Sudan declared "independent" under an Umma Party Government it would be possible nevertheless for British forces to remain in Khartoum as protectors of an "independent" but weak Sudan and thereby be in a position to control the flow of the Nile.

IMPERIALIST SETBACK

Progressive elements in both Egypt and the Sudan are convinced that neither country could be really independent without the elimination of imperialist influence from the entire Nile Valley area.

When the Sudan elections were held in November-December, 1953, the National Unionist Party with the aid of the slogan, "unity of the peoples of the Nile Valley against imperialism," defeated the British-sponsored Umma Party by a large majority. This victory of the NUP represented a set-back for British aims in the Sudan. The NUP leader, El Azhari, said at the time that his party did not recognise the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian Nile Waters Agreement (slightly modified in 1952) allotting "only one-twenty-third of the Nile waters" to the Sudan. He declared that the party intended to negotiate a new agreement allowing the Sudan more water with which to develop its agriculture.

More water for the Sudan does not mean less for Egypt. For with the building of the great dam at Owen Falls in Uganda, transforming Lake Victoria into the world's largest reservoir, a large volume of water can now be conserved and made available to both countries. However, in order

to get the benefit of this water the Jonglei Channel will have to be cut through 175 miles of the Sudd, the marsh area of Southern Sudan, to allow the vast new supplies to pass downstream quickly.

The cutting of this channel could be a joint operation of the two countries carried out, as have the negotiations so far, in the spirit of Bandung.

JOINT PROJECTS

However, as a result of the agreement reached at the end of May Egypt will now be able to proceed with the building of the vast new High Dam which is projected at Aswan. Without a satisfactory share of the Nile waters such a project would cease to be an economic proposition.

Indeed, the way is now open for Egypt and the Sudan to determine between themselves and without the intervention of a third party not only the utilization of the vital Nile waters, but also to consider the undertaking of any constructional project directed to that end.

The joint communique issued at the end of the Bandung Conference stated, among other things, that "there was general desire for economic co-operation among the participating countries on the basis of mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty." Given a continual desire on the part of their governments for such co-operation the peoples of Egypt and the Sudan will receive benefits from their great river such as they have never known before in the course of their long history.

the Ficksburg border I saw a Ficksburg traffic inspector stop all the buses bound for Basutoland to inspect them for overloading. At Fouriesburg the bus owners are trapped for touting passengers. My friends told me that the Union authorities collect tidy sums each month in admissions of guilt from the bus owners.

Yet both Ficksburg and Fouriesburg depend on Basutoland for a good deal of trade. In view of the persecution of the busowners there is the suggestion among Congressmen that the Basutoland buses should go only as far as the border, and that the local authorities should have to provide transport further into their own towns.

IN BASUTOLAND

By **ARNOLD SELBY**

I RECENTLY had the good fortune to spend two weeks in Basutoland, staying with friends in the three districts I visited, Maseru, Leribe and Teyateyaneng. My new friends taught me much about their country.

Basutoland has a high average rainfall. This year there has been too much rain, 20 inches in February alone I was told. The excessive rainfall has led to an almost complete failure of the maize crop. The mealies rot on the stalk before the people are able to reap. Grain mills charge the people threepence to grind a paraffin tin of mealies, and fourpence for wheat and millet. Looking through the books of one grain mill I found that normal takings amounted in other years to £3 and £4 a day, but since the failure of the crops the takings have been 14s., 13s. 10d., 3s., 11s. 8d. and 12s. on successive days. One mill had not ground anything for days. This gives one an idea of the extent of the crop failure.

The Department of Agriculture wants the people to grow wheat and claims that this will solve the problem. The suggestion is not popular and has been rejected by the people. Only the people of the mountains have taken to growing wheat, successfully, I am told. The majority of the people, however, live in the lowlands.

I asked about this resistance to wheat-growing and received varying answers. Some made the point that maize is the staple food of the people and they do not want to make any change in their diet. Even though the people of the mountains grow wheat they do not regard this as their main crop, and they buy mealies for the money they receive from their wheat crop. Others told me that there are no facilities for threshing wheat in the territory. The only threshing machines are owned by farmers in the Free State. The Free State farmer threshes his own wheat first before hiring out his machines, and this makes it too late for the Basutoland crops.

THE Basutoland African Congress is the counterpart of the African National Congress here. I spent a lot of time with Mr. Mohlele, the president, and other officials of the

Congress. In discussions with them one can clearly see to what extent the British authorities will go to maintain their grip on the Protectorate. The Basutoland Congress is leading the people on a platform of three main demands: for a legislative assembly; total opposition to incorporation in the Union of South Africa; and the abolition of the colour bar in the towns.

The demand for a legislative assembly is very strong and I did not come across one person who was opposed to it. The people are tired of being ruled by proclamation, which they claim is done in conjunction with Pretoria. The people want to make their own laws.

The demand for a legislative assembly became so militant that the authorities set up a Commission. But instead of the terms of reference being based on the peoples' demand for a legislative assembly, the Commission was empowered to investigate administrative reforms. The report of the Commission, known as the Moore Report, recommended a reduction in the number of chiefs, and more power to the White administration. The report has been rejected outright by the entire Basuto nation.

The Resident Commissioner summoned a special session of the Basutoland National Council to discuss the report. It seems that he tried to get the Council to adopt the report by having it discussed section by section. But section by section the Councillors rejected the report. After the Council had rejected 38 paragraphs out of a total of 148, the Resident Commissioner closed the session and insulted the Councillors by accusing them of discussing the report "unintelligently and irresponsibly."

The fight for a legislative assembly still continues. There have been attempts to divide the chiefs and the people. The chiefs are told that a legislative assembly will mean a loss of their authority. But the people make it clear that they want to make the laws, and the chiefs can still administer them. So on this demand the chiefs and the people are united.

It would be hard to find a single person in Basutoland who wants incorporation with the Union. If any

agreement is ever made for such incorporation it will certainly be over the heads of the Basuto people. Congress has made it crystal clear to the authorities that the people do not want incorporation.

I HAD the honour to meet a people's man, Mr. Josiel Lefela, the leader of the peasants' organisation, Lekhotla la Bafo. Known as the Dimitrov of Basutoland, Mr. Lefela has been arrested and prosecuted and has defended himself, more times than anyone cares to count. He is an uncompromising fighter for the rights of his people and in his cases he turns to accuse those who charge him.

Josiel Lefela, now 75 years old, is deeply loved throughout Basutoland. Practically everyone claims to be a member of Lekhotla la Babo. Even now Lefela has just been sentenced to one year's imprisonment for sedition.

Though there is no official colour bar in Basutoland, the White administrators do impose a colour bar in the towns. For instance, in public places in Maseru, the capital, there are separate facilities for Whites and Non-Whites. I understand that the Maseru Library is for Whites only. This state of affairs is being fought by the Congress. When hotel licences recently came up for renewal they were opposed by the Congress on the grounds that the hotels provided accommodation for Whites only. The licences were renewed with an endorsement that if the hotels did not have separate facilities for Non-Europeans they would have to accept Non-Europeans on the same basis as their other guests. Officially, therefore, no hotel in Basutoland can refuse to accept a person on grounds of race.

IF you are not wealthy and do not own a car, you have to travel round Basutoland by bus. The buses are privately owned, and I understand the majority of the bus-owners are struggling to make their services pay. I travelled fairly extensively by bus to various parts of the country. I found the buses were almost always full and are rendering the people an essential service by transporting them long distances at low cost.

The only transport from Ficksburg and Fouriesburg stations to Basutoland is by these buses, and the authorities of these two Free State towns are persecuting the bus owners. On

(Continued on previous page)

Literary Stock-Taking in the U.S.S.R.

IN THE WESTERN WORLD, proverbially, the artist, including the writer, starves in a garret. There are others who luxuriate in penthouses on the proceeds of best-sellers written with an eye to Hollywood and TV serialisation. Certain it is that, for the average citizen, literature, its problems and its contribution to life are too unreal, too remote from his daily existence to become the centre of great, nation-wide discussion and controversy.

It is difficult therefore to capture the scope and depth of the literary discussion, controversy and stock-taking that is under way in the Soviet Union. The Soviet writer has become a vital, living part of the tremendous sweep of socialist construction. He has been more than a recorder of Soviet life; he has been an inspirer, writing of the great conflicts that move society onward, enriching the understanding of the people and helping them towards conquest of each new obstacle that lay before them. At his best, he is a fighter for the advance of socialism, taking part in the living struggle. And because of that, the Soviet people in turn have to regard Soviet literature as an important part of their lives. For them, there is no passive acceptance of anything the writer produces as "good enough." Just as they demand more and better things of life for themselves and set to work consciously to win them, so they make their demands of their writers that they play their part, that they measure up to the spirit of their times and deal realistically with its life, its reality and its problems.

Last December in Moscow there took place the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet writers. Before the Conference there arose an intense literary controversy, not confined to the writers alone, but spreading to readers' meetings of thousand upon thousands of ordinary Soviet workers, in which the readers voiced their criticism of some of the failings and weaknesses which have revealed themselves in Soviet writing. The controversy about Ehrenburg's *The Thaw* is only one aspect of this great literary debate in which millions of readers, writers and critics joined.

The main burden of the criticism of post-war Soviet literature—as well as the self-criticism to which authors subjected themselves at the Congress—was that Soviet literature had lagged behind life. Where life was producing great conflicts between old social habits and new, socialist expansion, literature had glossed over conflicts; situations had been pale, lifeless, and characters pallid, unadventurous. Difficulties of growth had been glossed over. The deep-reaching conflicts and struggles of life had become—in many Soviet writings—not the clash of good and evil, but the debate of the good with the better.

The British writer, Jack Lindsay, who was present at the Congress, and at many writer-reader meetings beforehand, puts it this way: "Life has been moving very fast and heaping up much wealth in the spirits of men in the post-war U.S.S.R. At last the village, with its stubborn roots in the patriarchal past, has been thoroughly shaken—though there is still much of that past to shake out of it. Industry has made great strides. Science has shot ahead, securely based in the ever-

widening numbers of technically-equipped youngsters. Above all, the great movement of recent years is to be seen in two things — the amalgamation of many smaller collective farms into larger units, and the adventurous expansion of agriculture in the colonisation of virgin soil.

"Here is the life that literature has lagged behind. Instead of grappling with the deep-going conflicts, the wrenching away from old habits and fetters of thought, the clashes inside the family, inside the collective farm, the factory—the writer has tended to do what speakers at the Congress referred to as 'lacquering reality' or 'painting rosy pictures'."

The Congress recalled Soviet writers to their magnificent achievements in earlier times. It recalled that, in the early days of the Soviet state, when for the first time labour took on a new, heroic meaning, and men for the first time shaped their own destinies, Soviet literature had portrayed the "restless aspiring spirit of liberated man and his vision of the future"; it had portrayed the positive hero who led his people, despite all obstacles, to creative activity and construction. It recalled how, in the war years, Soviet literature had rallied and inspired its people to victory in bloody conflict, by taking from life the unconquerable spirit of the Soviet people, and weaving it into a literature which inspired yet greater unity and confidence for victory. The Congress recalled writers, from the passive "no conflicts" theories which had crept into their writing in the post-war days, to the great social task which is before them, the task of portraying with realism the world-shaking epoch in which they live, the epoch in which the last obstacles are being overcome in the way of the first, Communist society.

Ehrenburg's book, *The Thaw*, was a revolt against the rosy mist which had enveloped much of Soviet writing. Where others glossed over and concealed the evils of the old life which the people were shaking off, Ehrenburg leant over backwards, distorting the "trash left lying around"—to use his own phrase,—into the whole of life. Where others wrote of life against an unreal, uniformly happy, contented and glowing background, Ehrenburg wrote in unreal reverse against a background of uniform gloom, despondency, doubt and cynicism.

But to turn a trash-heap upside down does nothing to remove it.

In the pre-conference debates *The Thaw* came in for a good deal of criticism and review. The writer Simonov reviewed this book at exceptionally great length in the literary journal which has the largest circulation in the Soviet Union. Quoting here and there from this review cannot do it justice, for it examines exhaustively every character of any importance in the book, the dialogue, and Ehrenburg's technique for presenting his own attitudes. But Simonov finally concludes that the novel "presents a caricature of our artistic life." He found the book a "disappointing failure by a talented Soviet writer."

The Simonov criticism of *The Thaw* was followed by the publication in the same journal of columns of

readers' letters, some on the shortcomings in Ehrenburg's book, some criticising Simonov for an unbalanced and ineffectual analysis of Ehrenburg. An editorial note followed the letters, refuting the suggestion made in some foreign newspapers, that the discussions were a *condemnation* of Ehrenburg. The aim of Soviet criticism is to assist development, and the editorial board urged readers and writers and Ehrenburg to learn from this discussion.

During the literary discussions that raged in the Soviet Union, the poet Alexei Surkov, who is also secretary of the Writers' Union, made an important point about criticism. While, he said, "we must not in the slightest blunt the need to be ruthlessly critical of our faults . . . must speak forthrightly about our works of literature, without making allowance for the fact that books deal with present-day life, or for the importance of the ideas they contain, criticising any, the young,

the old, the venerable writer, we must nevertheless base our work on the fact that in 37 years the foundations have been laid for a *new* literature that has grown and gathered strength, the most progressive literature, the richest in ideas, telling mankind for the first time about people who 'were nobodies' and became all as a result of the October revolution . . ."

Soviet society is moving forward rapidly and swift change has brought new problems. Ever more demands are being placed on artistic workers. The intensity of the literary discussions are a testimonial to the breadth of culture among the people, the closeness between readers and writers, and the striving to create novels and poetry that reflect the richness of changing life. A new period in Soviet culture is about to open up. The discussions (and Ehrenburg's book) are a symptom of the upheaval now taking place, and the growing pains of the start of the new era.

"THE THAW," by EHRENBURG ★ Reviewed

THE WAY OUT?

"THE THAW" is a difficult book to appraise. As a novel, it has shortcomings that are surprising to find in a work by Ilya Ehrenburg. There is none of the gusto, the breadth, the eager exploration of life and above all the strong confident tone that made *The Storm* and *The Fall of Paris* such memorable books. The book is written in a chill, spare style as if the bitter winter that forms the background of the story had frostbitten the author's hand. He seems to be inhibited towards his characters; as though having created new types of characters (for Soviet literature) he was afraid where they might lead if he gave them full freedom of action.

And yet, in spite of its defects, the book has a way of staying with one. It is one of those strange books that have a delayed reaction, and for that reason a powerful one. Ehrenburg set out not merely to write a novel, but to criticise the longstanding trend of other Soviet novels and indeed of Soviet culture. His theme, stated bluntly, is that the Soviet people are gripped in a spiritual winter. "Why is it that when we meet, we so often have so little to say to one another. It is as though our hearts were frozen through." False values, the result of a one-sided picture of life and people, have distorted human relations, led to the growth of a subtle form of hypocrisy, and the encouragement of bureaucracy not only in industry and business, but in art, music, and literature. Lovers find themselves at odds because they do not know how to assess their emotions. Parents find themselves at arm's length with their children. Painters are deflected from the search for true beauty by the pressure of being obliged to paint portraits of popular factory managers and political figures. Actresses go through the agony of having to mouth absurd lines before derisive audiences.

Ehrenburg, despite his casual, almost tossed-off style, brings out these torments sharply and vividly. One begins to wonder whether his technique is not perhaps deliberate—an attempt to make style and structure match the bleak mood of the book. In the end, he succeeds in giving a many-sided picture of Soviet people, with their faults and weaknesses and well as their virtues, and without the pompous glorification one so often comes

across in Soviet novels. There, perhaps lies the power of this book. It is, of course, futile for anyone after this to deny that such problems and pains do exist in the Soviet Union. And *The Thaw*, which is already the subject of fierce controversy, is bound to be looked to time and again by Russian authors seeking to deal with the special and peculiar problems of their country.

Ehrenburg makes no attempt to minimise the problem. In fact the criticism against him is that he has exaggerated it: that he has given a distorted, one-sided picture as inaccurate as the very thing he attacks. But he does not paint a picture of despair. The winter is ending—hence the title. His aim is not merely to criticise, but to wake his readers up to the necessity for change. The time is now ripe for it, and indeed the slum clearance has already started. "We have taken a lot of trouble over one half of the human being, but the other half is neglected. The result is that one half of the house is a slum. I remember that article of Gorki's I read long ago, while I was still at school: he said we needed our own Soviet humanism. The word has been forgotten, the task has still to be done. In those days it was only a presentiment,—now it's time we tackled it."—so reflects Koroteyev, who might be described as the book's hero.

"Must have got into the habit of keeping my mouth shut," he muses, wondering why he had failed to stand up to his factory manager, a powerful hypocritical bureaucrat. "—used to seeing too much dirt. That's what is so bad. In the beginning, what could you expect? You start building a house and there's bound to be a lot of trash left lying around: but now it's time we were getting tidier—the house is being lived in after all."

Russia has a great literary tradition, but it must be admitted that in recent years Soviet writing has, as Ehrenburg feels, fallen upon an arid drought. Perhaps the reason for it has been a false concept of social realism, a glorification of aspects of Soviet life at the expense of the truth, a development that has had the paradoxical result of leading Soviet writing away from realism and into a romanticism as sentimental and banal as that found in a Victorian novelettes. Perhaps *The Thaw* will point the way out of the impasse.

H. B.

Ruth Reed
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