



THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST



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together with complete contents list, 1959-1967.

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THE NEW AFRICA— CAPITALIST OR SOCIALIST?

AFRICA IS IN REVOLT. From East to West, from North to South, the peoples of this great Continent are arising to claim their birthright that has been stolen. The imperialist Powers and the White minorities are being forced to give up the land and the natural resources. Africans are uniting in powerful national liberation movements and trade unions. The imperialists are trying to prolong their rule. They send soldiers to shoot down the people. They try to bribe the people's leaders. When that does not work they arrest and deport them on framed-up charges. They invent faked 'treason' charges and 'massacre' plots. They promise half independence, or self-government on the instalment plan.

These methods cannot succeed. Africa is on the march for freedom, her people are awake, and nothing can stop them from reaching their goal: government of Africa by Africans, for Africans. The imperialist powers must quit Africa. The White minorities must accept the condition of equality and give up their ill-gotten privileges.

What shape will the new Africa take? Will it be capitalist, like Western Europe and America? Or socialist, like Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China? That is something the peoples of this Continent will have to answer for themselves. It is a big question. The future happiness and well-being of our people and our children depend upon it. It is important that we should choose wisely.

Let us look at the two systems.

TWO SYSTEMS

We know capitalism in Africa. We have seen it and suffered under it.

Under capitalism, the land, the natural resources and the industries, built up by the hands of the workers, belong to private owners or companies. Each owner is producing not for the public good but for his private profit. He pays as little wages as he can and wants to take as much as possible for himself.

Take a capitalist who is making shoes in a factory. He is not worried about the people who are barefoot. He wants to make a lot of money and get rich. All the profit he makes comes out of the exploitation of

the workers, for all value comes from labour. Capitalism means the exploitation of man by man.

Socialism is different. All the means of production—the land, the mines, factories and so on—belong to the people as a whole. Production is planned. The aim is to see that everyone gets good food to eat, clothes to wear, houses to live in. The aim of production and of society, is to see that people are happy and comfortable, that they are highly educated and cultured. The worker knows that no capitalist profits from his labour. The country goes ahead quickly because development is properly planned. Socialism means the abolition of exploitation.

OVERCOMING BACKWARDNESS

Centuries of imperialist domination and robbery have left Africa backward and undeveloped. The European powers, Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium, have only been interested in taking as much wealth out of the country as quickly as possible. At one time they captured millions of our people, and deported them to Europe and America as slaves. Afterwards they enslaved Africans in their own continent, through forced labour on European-owned plantations, farms and mines, at starvation wages.

As a result of alien oppression and exploitation, Africa is the most backward part of the world. The great masses of her people live in terrible poverty, ignorance and disease. The first task of every African patriot is to liberate our Continent from alien domination, for without this there can be no progress. But to win and to keep true freedom we must also free Africa from backwardness. Her countries must be able to stand on their own feet economically, her people's living, health and cultural standards must be rapidly advanced.

Experience has proved that socialism is the most suitable method of quickly developing countries which are economically backward. Russia was formerly the most backward of the big European countries. Under socialism she has shot forward in forty years to become the most advanced, although many of those years were taken up in wars against imperialist intervention. In the last war, the Soviet Union was the only country on the mainland of Europe which successfully withstood Hitler's brutal armies and thus saved the world from Nazi domination.

It was socialism which gave Soviet industry the strength and her people the fighting spirit to resist and conquer. The Sputniks and the man-made planet prove that Soviet science and industry today are second to none.

In ten short years, socialism and Communist leadership have transformed China from a land of terrible backwardness, illiteracy and poverty, to a land of flourishing industry and agriculture, of advanced education and progress. India and China won freedom from imperialist rule at about the same time. But India chose the capitalist road; China the socialist road. Today China has far outstripped India in economic progress.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF SOCIALISM

Some people try to tell you there are different kinds of socialism. They like socialism, they say, but not the kind they have in the Soviet Union and China. The British Labour Party says it is in favour of socialism. So does the French Socialist Party. But if one studies these parties one will find that their socialism is only in words, not in deeds. Though the Labour Party was once in the government in England, the real power was still held by the big capitalists and imperialists. Private companies still own the big banks, industries and so on. The Labour Government continued to oppress the colonial people in the British Empire in the interests of big business. The French so-called 'Socialist' Party did the same. They support the French Government on the 'dirty war' against the people of Algeria.

Others talk of a special sort of 'African' socialism. Some African leaders of independent countries also claim to be socialists, although they do not practise socialism and even suppress socialist and Communist literature and leaders.

There is only one kind of genuine Socialism in the world. That is revolutionary Marxism, Communism. The so-called 'different kinds' of socialism have been proved not to be socialism at all, but just different kinds of capitalism, wearing a socialist mask to try to bluff the workers.

WHY THEY HATE COMMUNISM

Nothing is so much hated and feared by the imperialists and their agents as Communism and the Communists. American officials are running all over the Continent of Africa offering dollars—if only people will help them against Communism. But we notice that the people who shout so loudly against Communism are often the people who are most bitterly opposed to African freedom.

Look at the Union of South Africa. Everybody knows that the Nationalist Government of that country, with its policy of apartheid, is a savage and ruthless enemy of African progress. That is where Africans are hunted for passes, flogged and murdered, sent to forced

labour on farms and mines, insulted and persecuted, simply because they are dark-skinned.

It is no accident that the first thing the Nationalist Government did, when it took power in 1948, was to outlaw Communism. They banned the Communist Party, which for thirty years had led the people in struggles for freedom and equality. Hundreds of Communists have been banned and banished, driven out of their jobs, forbidden on pain of jail to go to meetings or take any part in political and trade union movements.

Yet, belief in Communism lives on in South Africa. It is spreading throughout the Continent, although every day it is denounced and attacked by agents of United States, British, French, Portuguese, and Belgian imperialism.

They hate Communism because they know that the Communists are the bravest, most clear-headed and incorruptible leaders in the people's struggle against imperialism, for freedom and equality. They know that once the African workers and peasants have mastered the great ideas of Communism, nothing will stop them in their onward march to freedom, independence and socialism.

THEY TELL LIES

The imperialists and White supremacists pass laws to make it illegal to defend Communism. They try to shut the mouths of the Communists. They tell lies about Communism to deceive the people. They hope that, as they have silenced the Communists, there will be no one to answer their lies. But the truth is stronger than lies. Communism is today a great and victorious world-movement, embracing more than a third of the human race. You cannot shut Africans out from the outside world or prevent their learning what is going on elsewhere. Nor can you succeed in silencing the voice of Communism in Africa, for the Communists are part and parcel of the people of Africa. The African Communists will answer the lies of the imperialists.

Here are some of the lies:

- (1) 'That capitalism is democratic, and Communism means dictatorship.'

Africans are not likely to be bluffed by this lie. They have seen 'Western democracy' in action for too long. They have seen it answer the demands of the Africans for real democracy and self-government with bullets, terror and mass arrests. Certainly Communism means to suppress the imperialist agents, and the institutions of backwardness and slavery which they have encouraged and tolerated. Call that dictatorship if you like. But it is a people's dictatorship, used by the workers and peasants against their enemies. For the masses it means

much greater freedom and democracy than is possible in any other form of society. It means people's control of the wealth and resources of their own country. Under capitalism, even where people have the vote, the rich are always the real rulers. Those who control the wealth are the real controllers of the State.

(2) 'That Communism is out to suppress religion.'

That is not true, either. Marxism is not a religious philosophy. It believes that everything can be explained rationally, and that all religions are forms of superstition. At the same time, Communists respect people's religious beliefs and the rights of all to propagate all religious, or anti-religious, views. Certainly, if the imperialists use religion as a cloak for oppression and the master-race cult, they must be vigorously opposed. But no genuine church or religious group has any need to fear a Communist or socialist society.

(3) 'That Communists are out to replace Western imperialism with "Soviet imperialism".'

Another straight lie. There is no such thing as 'Soviet imperialism'. There is no capitalist class in the Soviet Union to profit by exploiting colonies. Communists believe in self-determination: that all people have the right to govern themselves, in the interests of their own people. They reject all theories of 'master races' and 'inferior races', and fight to end race discrimination. The Soviet Union is giving generous aid in the development of African countries, to establish their national independence on a sound basis. Even where these countries are led by anti-Communists, like Nasser and the Emperor of Abyssinia, the Soviet Union is helping them as much as possible, without any strings or conditions. Those who talk nonsense about so-called 'Soviet imperialism' should remember that under Communist leadership and with Soviet assistance, China's 600 million people have achieved a greater measure of freedom, independence and unity than ever before in its long history.

Communists in Africa are out to win full freedom and independence for African countries.

IS AFRICA 'DIFFERENT'?

Some people say: 'Communism may be all very well in Europe, or Asia, but Africa is different. There are no classes or class struggle in this Continent; all Africans are the same; and they have only one task—to get rid of imperialism.'

Let us answer these points one by one.

First of all, Africa is only 'different' because, as a result of imperialism, it is economically backward. As soon as industries develop, and private

property in land, the people will be divided more and more into capitalists, workers and peasants.

Already there are classes and class struggles. There are rich and poor. There are Africans who own property and exploit the labour of others; and there are Africans who have nothing to sell except their labour-power. There are the workers, the proletariat, as Marx called them: the landless and propertyless.

The proletariat is the most advanced class, the bravest and most clear-sighted fighters against imperialism. They have nothing to lose but their chains, and they will fight to the end against imperialism, even when the middle classes would like to compromise and accept minor concessions which will leave the masses little better off than before.

It is true that our first task in Africa is to get rid of imperialism. Communist ideas are weapons in this struggle. The policy of Communists in countries suffering from national oppression is to unite all classes in the common struggle for freedom. This struggle will be won quicker and more completely if it is led by the working class, guided by the scientific understanding of Marxism.

After imperialism has been defeated, the struggle will not be over. The countries of Africa will still be faced with the tasks of overcoming poverty, exploitation, disease and ignorance. These battles can only be won by marching towards a Communist Africa.

KARL MARX AND THE SCIENCE OF SOCIALISM

There were Socialists in the world before the time of the great German revolutionary, Karl Marx, who died in 1883, but these pioneers had merely seen that it would be more reasonable to organise production in a socialist way, rather than a capitalist one. To them, socialism was a beautiful dream of what the world could be like. Marx changed socialism from a dream into a science. He discovered the laws which determine change in human society.

Marx showed how society develops from lower to higher forms—tribalism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism—according to the development of the productive forces at each stage.

The Marxist philosophy, dialectical materialism, enables us to understand these laws. It gives us the key to understanding the world as it really is—and how to change it.

All progress comes through conflicts and contradictions. There is a conflict between what is new and struggling to be born, and what is old and dying.

Great leaders, like Lenin and Mao Tse-tung have shown how these laws can be used to transform society. They saw that the main force in

modern society which is struggling for a better life is the working class.

Under the banner of Marxism the working class in one country after another is triumphing over capitalism.

THE DUTIES OF AN AFRICAN COMMUNIST

The imperialists are trying to keep the knowledge of Communism from the African people. But they cannot succeed. More and more working people in the Continent are striving to learn more about Marxism.

The duty of a Communist is to study Marxism and the conditions in his own country, wherever he may be, and to teach others.

In Africa Communists have also other duties, if they are not merely parlour-socialists. They have to take an active part in the struggles of their people, as oppressed people, for national liberation.

National liberation is a task for the whole nation, not just for the working class. Therefore the Communists, everywhere in our Continent, will work to build a United Front of National Liberation, of all classes, workers, peasants, intellectuals and businessmen.

Within this United Front they will also work to see that the working class plays an independent and leading part. The workers should be organised, economically and politically. They should be organised in trade unions to get better wages and conditions. The workers also need their own political party. Starting with Marxist study classes, they should aim at building a powerful Communist Party in each region of Africa, a Party that will be an essential and vital partner in the United Front, the pride of the workers and oppressed people.

Only by building a true Communist Party will the workers of Africa be able to play their leading part in the emancipation of their great continent. A Party which is a true leading section of the proletariat and the people as a whole, which fights in the front line of every people's struggle for freedom, big and small; a Party which earns its right to leadership, not by engaging in petty quarrels for positions, but by playing a brave and worthy role in the fight for bread, land and freedom; for the overthrow of imperialism and White domination, for the advance of Africa to a glorious socialist future.

MARXISM—THE SCIENCE OF CHANGE

TOUSSAINT

‘That which is willed happens but rarely. In the majority of instances the various desired ends cross and conflict with one another . . . are at the outset incapable of realisation . . . or the means of attaining them are insufficient . . . The end of the actions are intended, but the results which actually flow from these actions are not intended, or ultimately have consequences quite other than those intended.’

Friedrich Engels (*Ludwig Feuerbach*)

WHAT IS NOW HAPPENING IN AFRICA stands as testimony to the validity of these words of one of the great founders of Marxism during the last century. In Engels’ own day, who would have been bold enough to prophesy that imperialism’s impregnable colonial fortress in Africa would be bursting apart in revolution and upheaval within the short space of some seventy years? The intentions of the imperial conquerors of the continent were clear; to destroy the independent kingdoms and tribal societies of Africa; to subjugate the people to a regime of such overwhelming force that nothing could ever overthrow it; to harness the human and natural resources of the continent for the production of raw materials and super-profits for the factories and factory-owners of Europe. Seemingly nothing could stand in the way of those intentions.

Yet today it is clear that the ultimate results of the conquest and of the social order imposed by the conquerors has been vastly different from what was intended. Following its nose blindly, without understanding, imperialism succeeded only in creating a Frankenstein monster for itself in Africa. In place of the intended destruction of the independence of the peoples, it has developed modern nations capable of controlling independent modern states. In place of a continent of docile plantation labourers and semi-serfs, it has brought into being an urban working class, a proletariat imbued with revolutionary ideas. In place of the bottomless reservoir of cheap labour and cheap raw materials, it has created the beginnings of modern industrial economies. And consequently, the dream of permanent mastery over Africa is being forced to submit to the real end results of the conquest of Africa—to the growth of vast national liberation movements reflecting the rapidly developing national consciousness and will to independence and self rule of all the peoples of the continent.

GOOD INTENTIONS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Such blind and clumsy blundering without reckoning the great social forces which every society sets in motion is not peculiar to imperialism, or to Africa. History shows that similar experience through equally tortuous and misunderstood paths, has been the lot of every ruling class. Even today, in the very beginning of the age of African independence, there are signs that what is willed by leaders and desired by the people does not always flow from the actions which they take to achieve them. Liberation too, can end in a way not intended. Where the intention of the liberation movement has everywhere been to democratise Africa, already parts of liberated Africa show signs of a drift towards individual dictatorship. Where the intention was to break the economic stranglehold of imperialism, already far-reaching concessions to foreign imperialist investment in resurgent Africa are being made. Clearly held intentions, or even good intentions are not enough for those who would make their own history. They need more than sincerity; they need also a deep understanding of history, and of how it is made.

It is not for lack of sincere intention that Nkrumah's socialist beliefs, for example, become subordinated to the 'practical' need to open the Volta River project to American monopoly control and consequent deep penetration in all Ghana's economy. Nor is it for lack of sincere desire for independence that all French colonies in Africa except Guinea have chosen to remain in the French Empire rather than plough the hard furrow of independence.

Sincerity alone is not enough; even the most sincere of men and organisations must either understand the social forces which move society onwards, or become the blind tools of forces which they cannot understand and therefore cannot control or bend to their will.

'Active social forces', writes Engels (*Socialism—Utopian and Scientific*) 'work exactly like natural forces—blindly, forcibly, destructively, so long as we do not understand and reckon with them. But when once we understand them, when we grasp their action, their direction, their effect, it depends only on ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will and, by means of them, to reach our ends.'

As we shall attempt to show from time to time in these pages, Marxism is the science of the social forces around us. Marxism alone enables us to reckon with them, and thus to subject them to our will. In less than one hundred years, Marxism has developed to become one of the great guiding social theories of our time. It has become the basis by which almost one-third of mankind in the socialist countries regulate and control their own destiny. Yet even now, the black-out screens erected by imperialism against this science have been so effective and

complete, that the fierce light which Marxism sheds on such problems as now confront the people of Africa is scarcely appreciated by those who need it most.

LAWS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Accordingly, the whole process by which historical development defeats the highest hopes and sincerest intentions even of apparently all-powerful rulers remains largely mysterious and inexplicable to enlightened men and women in Africa. The process cannot be explained, as so many people still try to explain it, by seeking out the mistaken policy or the wrong decision of a statesman or colonial administrator as the source of the disaster. But from the standpoint of Marxism the process becomes clear and understandable. Marxists would explain the course of social development not from the ideas which men may hold, but from the material conditions of the life of that society, from the laws which govern its workings and which give rise to its ideas, as well as its social and political institutions.

Prior to Marx, the whole view of the changing course of society—that is, the whole view of history—was founded on the belief that the causes of historical changes lay in the changing ideas of human beings. It was also believed that the most important of all changes in history and the determining ones had been political changes. It followed logically therefore, that the causes of change were to be sought mainly in the ideas of the great political figures—in the ambitions of kings or the crusading zeal of clerics, in the policies of conquerors or the theories of their advisers. In this historical belief, Marx wrought a revolution. He showed, simply, that the first activity of men in society is to produce their physical needs, to feed and clothe and shelter themselves; and since that is so, men's ideas about the kind of society they needed could not determine the manner of their productive efforts, but must on the contrary reflect it.

‘Whatever is the being of a society,’ writes Stalin, summarising this materialist conception of history, ‘whatever are the conditions of the material life of society, such are the ideas, theories, political views and political institutions of that society.’

(Dialectical and Historical Materialism)

In the light of this materialist conception, the whole process of changing political ideas and institutions ceases to be mysterious and incomprehensible, and becomes instead an orderly, understandable course of development. The laws which govern this development can accordingly only be discovered from a study of the manner in which society produces its worldly goods. On the basis of such a study, as Stalin puts it:

‘Social life, the history of society, ceases to be an agglomeration of “accidents” and becomes the history of the development of society according to regular laws, and the study of history becomes a science . . . as precise a science as, let us say, biology.’

Africa today stands in vital need of such a science. Here we are in the midst of a vast, sweeping social change. The old social order of colonial Africa is being destroyed, territory by territory. A new social order based on independence is coming into being. The rallying cries of ‘Freedom!’ and ‘Equality!’ and ‘Independence!’ move millions of people to deliberate political activity.

Here in these slogans are expressed the clear intentions of the leaders and the masses of Africa alike. But how are those intentions to be secured? How are the social forces of the New Africa to be harnessed to ensure that the end result of liberation is what is intended? How is the freedom, equality and independence of Africa to be built as we want it, and not to end in disastrous chaos as the result of the blind and destructive working out of uncontrolled social forces?

THE SOCIALIST PATH

Many of the leaders of African liberation, inspired by the example of countries led by Marxist revolutionaries, proclaim socialism as the path which Africa must follow. But not even sincere socialist convictions are enough, unless they are based on understanding of how and by whom and in what circumstances it can be achieved.

‘Since the historical appearance of the capitalist mode of production,’ Engels wrote seventy years ago, ‘the appropriation by society of all the means of production has always been dreamed of, more or less vaguely, by individuals as well as by sects as the ideal of the future. But it could become possible, could become a historical necessity only when the material conditions for its realisation were there. Like every other social advance, it becomes practicable not by men understanding that the existence of classes is in contradiction to justice, equality etc., not by the mere willingness to abolish these classes but by virtue of certain new economic conditions.’

More than any others in Africa today, those whose aim is to lead Africa along the path to socialism need the understanding of society. They need to know the course of social development and the laws within which men can make their own history as they wish to.

What then are the laws of social development revealed by Marxism? Stated at their briefest, they are these:

- * that the starting point of social change is not in the ideas that society holds, but in the way society produces its goods;
- * that relations between men and thus between classes in society rise in conformity with the state of development of the forces of production;

- * that since the forces of production constantly develop and improve, the social relationships of a former time constantly lag behind present needs;
- * that accordingly, sooner or later the old social order becomes an insuperable obstacle to the further development of the new forces of production, and must be changed;
- * that the old ruling classes tend to resist all change in the social order, and conflict between them and the classes seeking change is therefore the state of existence of all class society;
- * that this class struggle is the moving force of social and political change in class society.

It is popularly believed that Marx invented the theory of the class struggle. But the class struggle was not invented by Marx or anyone else; it was revealed from the studies of past history by historians whose minds were not so clogged with the kings and conquerors as to be unmindful of all else.

‘No credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them,’ Marx himself wrote. ‘Long before me, bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this struggle . . . What I did new was to prove: that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular phases in the history of production [i.e. the phase of privately owned means of production—Ed.], that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.’

(Letter to Kugelman)

Thus Marx laid the scientific basis for socialism. Earlier socialists had proclaimed their visions of the classless society as the result of the triumph of reason, as the ‘perfect’ social system to be imposed upon society by visionaries. Marx however showed how socialism was the certain end result of the social forces at work in capitalist society. He showed how the capitalist mode of production creates, willy-nilly, increasingly violent contradictions between the social relations of society and its forces of production—between the social nature of modern, mass-production industry on the one hand, and the private appropriation of all the products on the other. He demonstrated thus, for the first time, that the class struggle of capitalist society leads inevitably to the overthrow of the capitalist class, and its substitution by the industrial working class, the proletariat. He showed thus, even in the period when the working class of Europe was numerically as puny and insignificant as it is today in many parts of Africa, that the proletariat was the revolutionary vanguard of the new socialist order which must replace capitalism, at once the gravedigger of the capitalist system and the force capable of building a socialist order.

MARXISM IN AFRICA

Some African socialists claim that, however relevant and important the Marxist theory of the class struggle may be for highly-industrialised Europe, it has little significance for present-day Africa, which is only now emerging from feudalistic colonial conditions. President Sékou Touré has been quoted—perhaps inaccurately—to this effect. No one, least of all Marxists themselves, would claim that Africa's liberation proceeds along the clear-cut bourgeois-versus-proletarian class lines dealt with in many of the classics of Marxist writing. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin concerned themselves chiefly with the problems of the socialist revolution in Europe, only to a minor extent with those of Asia, and scarcely at all with what was still, in their times, the dark and backward continent of Africa. It would be idle to deny that Marxists have as yet only scratched the surface of the concrete study of Africa in the light of Marxist theory, and are only now at the beginning of their interpretation of its problems.

But to deduce from the scantiness of Marxist writings about Africa that Marxism therefore has nothing to offer the continent, would be to distort the vital core of Marxism. Marxist science is not a formula or a catalogue of dogmatic solutions to be applied to every situation like the catechisms. Above all else, Marxism teaches that every situation has to be studied concretely in the light of all surrounding circumstances; it teaches us to look not merely at things as they are, but as they are becoming in the course of their development and change. Clearly the precise understanding of the problems of Africa, even in the light of Marxism, cannot be gleaned from the writings of great Marxists about other countries. Understanding comes from the application of Marxist science to the concrete problems of Africa. Stalin, for example, writes in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*:

'Out of the conflict between the new productive forces and the old relations of production, out of the economic demands of society, there arise new ideas. The new ideas organise and mobilise the masses; the masses become welded into a new political army, create a new revolutionary power, and make use of it to abolish by force the old relations of production and to firmly establish the new system. The spontaneous process of development yields place to the conscious actions of men, peaceful development of violent upheaval, evolution to revolution.'

Here in a generalised fashion, Marxism reveals the radical change currently under way throughout Africa. But without concrete study of Africa, such generalisation fails to explain precisely the source and direction of the change, its particular scope and its particular limits.

THE REVOLUTIONARY CLASS

Up to now, except in perhaps the Union of South Africa and Algeria, the process of development has been spontaneous, taking place without conscious understanding of the forces at work and thus without control by the leaders of the currents they set in motion. Only in such countries as South Africa and Algeria have there been substantial Marxist Parties, applying the science of social change to their own special conditions, and subjecting the active forces of social change more and more to their will. The reason for this is not that people in these two territories are more reasonable, greater seekers after truth than elsewhere. The reason is simple. Marxism is the world outlook of a particular class, the industrial proletariat. It is the science of how the proletariat can abolish the old relations of capitalist production and with it the whole of class society, and establish a new socialist order. Where the proletariat has developed first in Africa, there the ideas of Marxism have developed most powerfully; there Communism has become an influential political creed. 'The existence of a revolutionary idea', wrote Marx and Engels (*German Ideology*), 'pre-supposed the existence of a revolutionary class.'

That revolutionary class, small and formerly insignificant in most of Africa, now stands on the threshold of a dynamic advance. Whether the men and women of the liberation movements of Africa understand it or not, whether they even desire it or not is immaterial. The liberation of Africa is creating the conditions everywhere for the rapid emergence of the proletariat, divorced from the small property-rights of peasant life, living by selling its labour power. It is thus creating also the conditions for the dynamic advance of the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, which the whole liberation movement needs to carry it through to the ends which it has set itself. Just as the small but developing French bourgeoisie set itself at the head of all classes in the revolution of 1786, so too the working class, once it is imbued with the science of Marxism, once it is organised into a Marxist party, can set itself at the head of the African liberation movement. And in so doing, it will fight not for itself alone; but it will use its revolutionary spirit and its revolutionary theory to carry all classes forward to the achievement of their own aims—freedom, independence, equality.

UGANDA—A Survey

G.M.

UGANDA LIES ASTRIDE THE EQUATOR in the heart of tropical Africa. The country is hemmed in by the Republic of the Sudan in the North, the Belgian Congo in the West, by Tanganyika in the South and Kenya in the East. Lake Victoria Nyanza, the biggest lake in Africa and the second biggest in the world, is in Uganda. The fabulous Ruwenzori range of mountains are on the Western frontier and the immortal Nile rises at the Rippon Falls. Owing to its beauty Uganda is often called the Pearl of Africa.

The population of Uganda numbers over five and a quarter million of whom almost all are Africans. There are 48,000 Asians and 6,000 Whites.

The country came under the control of British imperialism during the latter part of the 19th century. Its conquest followed the usual sequence of missionaries, traders and army.

When the imperialists first came to Uganda they found a highly developed empire ruled over by the Kabaka of Uganda, Mutesa I. The empire over which Mutesa I ruled was a feudal one in its social and economic structure. The Kabaka ruled with the help of a Lukiko or Parliament consisting of his major chiefs. The premier of Saza chiefs stood closest to the councils of the Kabaka and in his name ruled over vast counties. The Saza chiefs in turn appointed subordinate or Gombolola chiefs to look after village affairs.

After a series of wars conducted in the name of religion the British took control of the whole country and entered into treaty relationship with the Kabaka and other rulers who had formerly been part of the Kabaka's empire. This treaty is known as the 1900 Agreement.

The British carved up the country into four provinces: the Buganda province, the Western, Northern and Eastern Provinces. In terms of the 1900 Agreement the government of the Province of Buganda was shared between the Kabaka and the British Government. Wide powers were left in the hands of the Kabaka and his feudal Lukiko but, of course, the usual 'safeguards' left final control firmly in the hands of the Uganda Protectorate Government headed by the British Governor.

BREAK-UP OF FEUDALISM

The Uganda Agreement of 1900 laid the basis for the break-up of the feudal economy that had existed prior to the imperialist control of the

country. The principle of individual freehold tenure of land was introduced for the first time. Initially freehold rights were granted to a few landowners—usually drawn from the privileged feudal classes. Today the number is very large, with over 50,000 independent landowners each owning his land freehold. More than one-third of Uganda's 94,000 square miles is held in this way.

The simultaneous introduction of cash crops such as cotton and coffee ushered in a tremendous agrarian revolution in Uganda which transformed the whole economy. Today Uganda is one of the great producers of cotton and coffee in the world. The wealth created by the cultivation and export of these products is based largely on land owned by these independent farmers.

Only one-third of the land was made available for freehold. There are also a number of plantations in the hands of settlers. But the rest of the land remained in the hands of feudal barons who maintained the old relationship between themselves and the 'Abakopi' or peasant serfs.

Thus we find side by side with the modern capitalist economy of independent landlords and farmers, the feudal traditional landlords who dominated the Lukiko and the Kabaka.

TOWARDS SELF-GOVERNMENT

As the economic strength of the cotton and coffee farmers grew, so they made increasing demands for more power in the government. These demands were most vociferous in the province of Buganda which was the most highly developed area economically. The demands were directed against the government of the Kabaka and his Lukiko as an immediate target. But implicit in the struggle of the cotton and coffee farmers was the question of British control of Uganda.

In 1948 the first two important parties independent of traditional ties were formed, the BATAKA ASSOCIATION which represented the interests of the peasants, and the UGANDA FARMERS UNION representing the interests of the farmers.

The activities of these organisations culminated in the powerful revolt of 1949 against the government of the province of Buganda which was only put down with the help of British forces. Although the revolt appeared to have failed numerous concessions were made to the farmers. The Lukiko was enlarged to include representation for groups other than the traditional chiefs. Greater economic opportunities were also conceded by the British Government, which further increased the power of the cotton and coffee farmers. Following the 1949 revolt there began a coalescence of feudal and farming interests especially in the province of Buganda. The Kabaka began to represent not only

traditional feudal interests but those of the Buganda bourgeoisie. It is therefore not surprising that the next crisis in Uganda in 1953 was between the people of Buganda and the British Government. The person banished for putting forward the demands of the Buganda people was the Kabaka himself! The British-supported ruler had become a rebel four years after the 1949 revolt.

The crisis of 1953, when the people of Uganda engaged in great struggles, culminated in the British government withdrawing the order of exile on the Kabaka of Buganda. A fresh agreement was signed in 1955 to replace the original 1900 Agreement. The 1955 Agreement now in force defined the position of the Kabaka and further strengthened the position of the Buganda bourgeoisie.

BOURGEOIS LEADERSHIP

The national struggle against British imperialism in Uganda is taking place under the leadership of the powerful African bourgeoisie, which is utilising the struggle for the furtherance of its own interests. Because the Buganda province is the most developed, events seem to be centred on the problems of Buganda and nothing much is heard of the rest of the country. The truth is that only a little over one million Africans are in Buganda province. The rest of the people live in the other three provinces that form the Uganda protectorate. By placing the Buganda bourgeoisie in a more privileged position than the rest of the people, the British Government is fostering divisions among the Africans of Uganda which are making it difficult to build a united movement.

A fresh struggle is on today in Uganda. Leaders have been banished and organisations proscribed in the Economic Boycott campaign being waged in Buganda. The campaign is directed against Asian and European traders. These are the chief competitors of the Buganda bourgeoisie.

The proletariat in Uganda is still relatively small. It is estimated that the total of wage-earners is about 300,000. The true proletariat—the industrial working class—is much smaller. Up to about the end of the second world war economic development was based on agriculture. Since then, industries have now sprung up. These are centred on fishing, cement, mining and textiles. The symbol of the new industrial trend in Uganda is the huge £22 million Owen Falls hydro-electric scheme. This scheme is designed to utilise the rapids, near the point where the river Nile has its source, for the production of cheap electric power.

TOWARDS NATIONAL UNITY

Many of the organisations that have been associated with the national struggle in Uganda have failed to see the perspective of the struggle in Uganda as a whole. Dominated as they were largely by the Buganda traditional elements or the bourgeoisie, they have been unable to unite the entire people of Uganda in a national movement against imperialism. The absence of an all-in national movement organised on a Uganda-wide basis enables the imperialists to utilise the divisions in Uganda society, play the other tribes against the Buganda, the Buganda against the Asians, and so on.

What Uganda appears to need is a mass national democratic and progressive organisation capable of uniting all classes and groups in the country. Such a united democratic national organisation, to be effective, must put forward the real demands of all the people of Uganda. The historic stage in Uganda is still that of bourgeois democratic revolution. But this revolution requires the mobilisation of all progressive elements in Uganda.

The *Uganda National Congress* whose membership is to be found largely in the new industrial centres seems to be aiming at an organisation such as we describe. It was founded in 1952 and held its first meeting on April 6th, 1952. The meeting was held to coincide with the massive protests in South Africa which marked the beginning of the historic campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws. It must be admitted, however, that the Congress is fighting heavy odds as compared with the organisations which have the direct support of the Buganda bourgeoisie. It has not yet gained mass support.

It would greatly assist the work of the National Liberation movement in Uganda if the 300,000 or so wage-earners were organised in Trade Unions. A tremendous advance would also follow the formation of a Communist Party, however small.

PROBLEMS OF THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION

GEORGE MAXWELL

'It is high time that Communists should openly in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies and meet this nursery tale of the spectre of Communism with a manifesto of the party itself.'

Communist Manifesto, 1848.

SO RAPID AND SO FUNDAMENTAL are the changes that are sweeping over the continent of Africa and its peoples that it is perfectly proper to describe them as revolutionary. The whole of Africa is in revolt. In place of formerly dependent and colonial territories are new and vigorous independent states. In those territories where freedom has not yet been won powerful national liberation movements are waging resolute and determined struggles against imperialism.

In 1950 there were only four independent states in Africa—Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, and the Union of South Africa. The following year Libya became independent; in 1956, Sudan, Morocco and Tunisia; in 1957 Ghana; in 1958 the Republics of Guinea and Algeria came into being. Today independent states embrace one-third of the area and half the population of Africa. By next year Nigeria, the Cameroons, Togoland and Somaliland will join the ranks of independent states. The above is a measure of the speed of advance in the African revolution.

After the retreat of imperialism from Asia at the end of the second world war the apologists of imperialism dreamt of years of empire in Africa. This continent was looked upon as a relatively safe area for long-term investment. Western imperialism counted on years of unrestricted exploitation of African raw materials. They all reckoned without the people of Africa itself.

It must however be said that imperialism in retreat is not imperialism routed. It is correct for us to celebrate the emergence to independence of African states as a defeat for imperialism. This is because independence is not the result of magnanimity by the imperialist states themselves. They never 'grant' independence. It is forced upon them by the strength of the national liberation movement. Yet independence in the juridical sense is not the end of the road. The technique of formal independence is one that is widely used by imperialist states. The technique is to substitute for direct imperialist rule, indirect rule

directed towards the objects of imperialism which remain the economic exploitation of the world in the interests of a handful of monopolists and financiers. In 1920 Lenin described the technique thus:

‘It is necessary constantly to explain and expose among the broadest masses of the toilers of all countries, and particularly of the backward countries, the deception systematically practised by the imperialists in creating, under the guise of politically independent states, states that are wholly dependent upon them economically, financially and militarily.’

(Lenin, *Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question*, June 1920.)

The people of Africa must therefore look beyond the proclamation of independence to discover whether or not *real* freedom has been achieved.

Freedom can only be real when national independence is coupled with a social and economic revolution carried out in the interests of the masses of the people.

Such changes cannot be won except through a national struggle led by the only revolutionary class of our times—the proletariat and the party, the Communist Party.

Developments in Africa have reached a stage at which in each country a Communist Party must be built to shoulder its responsibilities as leader and teacher of the African revolution.

Guided by the all-conquering science of Marxism-Leninism the African revolution can be decisively completed and a beginning made with the building of genuine People’s Democracies as a prelude to the achievement of Communism in Africa.

If the working class and its political party—the Communist Party—do not assert their independent and leading role the African revolution cannot achieve complete victory.

Up to the present the national liberation struggle in Africa has been by and large inspired and led by the bourgeoisie. The imminence of independence throughout most of Africa heralds the end of the positive contributions by the bourgeoisie. In our era the bourgeoisie is not a revolutionary class except when it participates in the colonial revolution against imperialism. Even in this latter case the bourgeoisie cannot be thoroughly and consistently revolutionary. As soon as a certain point is reached in the revolution against imperialism the bourgeoisie and other reactionary social forces compromise with imperialism to preserve their own interests at the expense of the people.

The attitude of the leaders of some of the newly independent African states to Communism is an indication of their changing role which is now rapidly becoming that of partners of imperialism against the toiling masses. In those countries the repressive legislation directed against the working class has been taken over from the former colonial

regimes and utilised by them for the same purpose. In these countries the Communist Party is illegal and communist literature is banned. The economic and social position of the people in many such countries remains basically the same as it was under the direct rule of the imperialists. The bourgeoisie have fulfilled their historic role in the African revolution and cannot carry it any further.

In these conditions it becomes necessary for the scientific outlook of Marxism-Leninism to become part of the African revolution. Concretely this means that in the more developed countries, where the bourgeoisie has grown, the conditions have matured for the formation of Communist Parties.

In all African countries, particularly in those that are independent, the task must be carried forward of organising the workers as a class. This task can only be carried out effectively under the leadership of the Communist Party. Only thus can the working class achieve hegemony of the African revolution. Communist currents and tendencies must now be crystallised into the formation of Communist Parties no matter how small. In this way Marxism-Leninism can be wedded with the practice of the African revolution.

WE WELCOME Comrade Maxwell's article as a thoughtful contribution to an important field of discussion. It contains many true and important passages. At the same time we think that some of his statements about the role of the national bourgeoisie in Africa are too sweeping. In general, it should be said, imperialism has inhibited the growth of a big indigenous capitalist class, especially in areas of extensive White settlement. It is wrong to assume that the whole of the African capitalist class will be content with formal political independence, after which they will compromise with imperialism at the expense of the people. An important section of this class may well continue in a national united front, together with workers, peasants and patriotic intellectuals, to the building of a genuine people's democracy. Reactionary forces, such as tribal chiefs, who owe their positions to the continued influence of imperialism, may be more likely to side with imperialism against the progressive forces, including the national bourgeoisie. We agree with Comrade Maxwell that the task of the advanced workers in the more developed countries is to form their own independent Communist Parties. But our view is that the principal task of these Parties in the present historical period is to take part in and strengthen the national united front, together with the peasants, the patriotic intellectuals and the democratic sections of the national bourgeoisie, in order to win

and secure political independence, as well as to institute a radical programme of land reform and economic development which will make independence a reality. In a word, to use his own expressive phrase, to carry through the *African revolution*.

(Editorial Board).

‘Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. **FIRST:** the awakening of national life and national movements, struggle against national oppression, creation of national states. **SECOND:** development and intensification of all kinds of intercourse between nations, breakdown of national barriers, creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc.

‘Both tendencies are a world-wide law of capitalism. The first predominates at the beginning of its development, the second characterises mature capitalism that is moving towards its transformation into socialist society. The national programme of the Marxists takes both tendencies into account, and demands, firstly, equality of nations and languages, prohibition of all privileges whatsoever in this respect and also the right of nations to self-determination; and secondly, the principle of internationalism and uncompromising struggle against the contamination of the proletariat with bourgeois nationalism, even of the most refined kind.’

LENIN: Remarks on the National Question.

This Magazine

COMMUNISM HAS BECOME the vital social and political belief of our times. Already one-third of mankind has chosen the road to socialism under the leading banners of the Marxist parties. Everywhere else, millions of men and women press forward to their own liberation, inspired by the parties of Communism.

In this, as in so much else, Africa lags behind the world. The forces of imperialism, which have made Africa the 'dark continent', have also kept the people curtailed off from the liberating spirit of Communism.

This magazine, the *African Communist*, has been started by a group of Marxist-Leninists in Africa, to defend and spread the inspiring and liberating ideas of Communism in our great Continent, and to apply the brilliant scientific method of Marxism to the solution of its problems.

It is being produced in conditions of great difficulty and danger. Nevertheless we mean to go on publishing it, because we know that Africa needs Communist thought, as dry and thirsty soil needs rain.

To you, the reader, we say, comrade and fellow-worker, wherever you may be, read and study this magazine. Pass it on to fellow-workers and form groups to discuss it. These groups may become the foundation stones of great and important Communist Parties in many lands that will bring salvation to your country.

THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST

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