

# WHAT OUR READERS WRITE

## Thirst for Knowledge

There is a great thirsting all over Africa for Marxist books, the writings of Communists. In South Africa where the Communist Party has been illegal since 1950 the Government, spearheaded by the Minister of "Justice" Mr. Vorster, has in recent months launched a great offensive against Communism. Night after night, for over a week, Radio South Africa broadcast State Information, Special Branch and police versions of what Communism stood for. The idea was to make the flesh of South Africans creep, to awaken them to this "danger" in their midst. Some of the broadcasts drew on documents and writings of Communists and the underground Communist Party. The extracts broadcast were taken out of context, were slanted and distorted. But the broadcasts had the exact opposite effect that the Government intended! Where documents and declarations of Communists were quoted in a reasonably accurate form—like the newly adopted Programme of the South African Communist Party, shortly to be widely circulated throughout Africa—listeners clustered close to their radios and enthusiastically approved aspects of the Communist programme presented to them. The ideas that make the South African government tremble with apprehension, inspire South African workers and patriots to greater resistance to the tyranny of the government and greater support of Communists, foremost in the struggle for national liberation, and foremost with the blue-print of a new society which will banish oppression.

The letters which come to this Journal from all over Africa reflect this intense interest in Marxism.

"Increase our order from 50 to 150 copies," writes a book distributing depot in Nigeria's Eastern Region.

"We will do our best to make the journal read widely and distributed throughout our Republic. Our library will ever remain at

the service of *The African Communist* writes a library in Mogadiscio, Somaliland.

A supporter from the same country, the Somali Republic, has sent a rough map of his country, for the purpose of planning better distribution of the journal, and detailed proposals for newspaper and radio advertising of the magazine. His plans are ambitious and large-scale, as befits our journal with the grandeur of its ideas for social change.

From Nyasaland has come a letter "My friends and I are interested to read all about Communism and anti-imperialism, also neo-colonialism. I must get copies of your journal and lots of my friends too."

From Accra, Ghana: "Our willingness to undertake the distribution and sale of this journal is the contribution we want to make towards African solidarity. To begin with we shall start with 500 copies of each issue and we hope it should be possible for us to increase the quantity. . . ."

Letters ask not only for a regular, and larger supply of copies of our Journal, but also for other Marxist publications, many by name, seen on bookshop catalogues but tantalisingly unavailable in most countries of Africa who try to fight the ideas of socialism by physically banishing its writings from bookshops and libraries. "I thirst for knowledge of Communism" writes a *Cape Town* reader, asking for other books, and this is echoed from Northern Rhodesia's copperbelt, from Nyasaland, from Nigeria and other West African states. AND from *Canada* "Please send me a bundle of 20 copies, going back to the February 1962 issue" (Saskatoon); the *United States*: "Your contents are inspiring . . . I am a student here but my place of birth is Kenya, and above all Africa"; from *India* "We are very happy to arrange for the circulation of your journal; the people of India are very much interested in African developments and watch them closely"; and from *Germany* "Your journal is very useful for my work. I am writing my university thesis on South Africa, also Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies, trying to analyse the interests of the different groups of the bourgeoisie . . . the links and differences between it and international finance capital. Now you know why your journal is of much value to me. . . ."

### LESOTHO

A courageous letter from a high school pupil of *Basutoland* puts its finger accurately on official fears of communism and the steps taken to try to banish its force and influence:

"I am in the bounds of school, which rather incapacitates me,

because our country seems to have a natural hatred of communism, partly through lack of understanding and partly through sheer dislike. The punishment for communism might be expulsion for me. Ever since last year someone got a scholarship from the Soviet Union for education there, the government decided to take up the rival, opposite side. Sometimes those particular students' passports would not be signed, or if signed they were threatened that there would be no work for them after their studies. The result of this among students is that they have been taken up with politics. Many act rashly because their main aim and target is to revenge themselves and show the government its misdoings. . . ."

This cry for education, and the chances of education both in socialism and in a socialist country, echoes from many corners. For second to imperialist propaganda about the "evils" of communists and socialism, is the effort to stop young people of Africa at all costs from tasting its benefits and influences at first hand . . . and realising that the hostile propaganda is a desperate—but dishonest—last manoeuvre to throw a concrete wall between socialism and Africa. This manoeuvre, like so many of the other, fails too. We have had a letter from a leading Rhodesian, addressed from Czechoslovakia: "At last I have a scholarship to study in the socialist camp, a thing I was longing for. The evils of capitalism can never be forgotten and I am determined to fight for the attainment of a socialist society in Africa. There is nothing that can unite the young states of Africa but scientific socialism. White or Black capitalism has no room in young Africa. Socialism caters for the interests of the masses. Send two copies of the journal. . . ."

The emergence of a strong trend of socialist thinking and, more, pressures for organisation of a socialist movement, is the newest feature of the Rhodesian scene. Much of the organisation has to go on outside Rhodesia for there, the Welensky government is trying to stave off its collapse by the suppression of the African movement. A letter from a group forced into (temporary) political exile says: "One of our friends at home is already serving a prison sentence of two years in connection with our movement. . . . He was also found with political literature. Another is being hunted by the police as though he had committed murder! We understand several false charges have been made against him. He is reported to be in hiding and no one knows where he is. . . ."

## **NIGERIA**

Rhodesia is not the only place where Africans working for socialism and socialist principles are intimidated and persecuted.

From Nyasaland a letter appeals: "Please do not send your publication to me; I am liable to be prosecuted for having it in my possession"; and from Nigeria: "The atmosphere in Nigeria is charged with suspicions of communist tendencies". But this is not the only side of the coin. Let another letter from Nigeria have the last word here:

"This is the second time of my being in contact with your idealistic magazine; the articles therein are interesting, educative and enlightening. Apart from that, it represents the most instant need and inspiration of the present generation.

"My colleagues in the Northern Nigeria who are as well ardent advocates of principles and teachings of Marxism-Leninism, join me to express our appreciation and full support in your struggle not only to wipe out the yoke of imperialism and neo-colonialism from the continent of Africa, but also to spread the ideas of communism throughout the continent. We say go ahead with the struggle and that the socialist youth in Nigeria are forever with you in your fight for freedom and social justice in South Africa. It is our belief that imperialism and all their reactionaries have no future; and that their momentary rampancy is only an indication of the last kicks of their deathbed struggle.

"Furthermore, the imperialist and their moribund forces think they are still in the darkened-days when they can carry the bible under their armpit and deceive the people that they came to preach the gospel, yet rob them of their richness and place economic reliance on them. The imperialist exploited us by taking away all the minerals; gold, diamond, iron, copper, timber etc., they occupied the most fertile land and left the unfertile for us. For this we the patriotic youth in Nigeria like others in Africa, shall never grow tired in our effort to instil into the people the principles and ideals of communism. Communist-society which provides better living conditions for all and not for a handful few; it is also a society which stressed that even before God all men are created equal, and finally a society where what counts much are men and not profits.

"Countrymen and general readers, I say without the teachings and ideals of communism, mankind particularly we the Blacks shall fall tyranny to imperialism and neo-colonialism; without them we fall tyranny to political slavery or the tyranny of crass materialism and selfishness. Let us not grow tired in our struggle to liberate Our Africa; it is through this decisive struggle that victory could be achieved."