



### Mr Nkoana on Racialism.

SIR,—In his article "Southern Africa — the big question mark for the OAU" (*The New African*, October 1965), Mr. Matthew Nkoana of the Pan Africanist Congress (South Africa) quotes a great deal from the 1949 Declaration of the African National Congress Youth League. These are youthful effusions, full of mystical concepts, laden with insularity and blatant racialism. Let us take a typical example. "African nationalism is a dynamic force, because it is not a foreign importation. It has its roots deep down in the heart of every African. It is an unsuppressible urge towards self-realisation, self-determination, independence, freedom". If we were to close our eyes for a moment and substitute Afrikaner for African we would hear the voice of Verwoerd speaking here. There is one difference here of course, that while there is more justification on the part of Mr. Nkoana for feeling as he does, the sentiments are practically the same. It would have been better if Mr. Nkoana had dismissed these as boyish effusions and we would have appreciated his feelings. But no! he proudly states: "This was to become part of the main platform of those who broke away from the ANC in 1958".

Mr. Nkoana then proceeds: "For two decades especially (1940-1960) the issues in South Africa

have been blurred and our thinking befuddled by extreme obsession with what may be called anti-racialism". Mr. Nkoana seems extremely sore about the fact that his African nationalism was called the inverse of Verwoerdism and severely condemned and rejected as racialism by the population as a whole. In a land where, despite the fact that racialism is fostered and nourished, entrenched in every law of the land, which permeates every aspect of life and poisons the very air one breathes in, the people reject it and moreover spurn it. Why does this undoubted advancement in political enlightenment not earn the praise of Mr. Nkoana? Why does this attack on racialism earn his condemnation? He should know that a rejection of racialism means a rejection of tribalism and leads to nationhood. He should know that the main obstacle facing the liberated countries in Africa is that tribalism still flourishes and is the means employed by the neo-colonialists to entrench their exploitation . . .

Mr. Nkoana is at pains to defend racialism (p. 186) but contradicts himself when he states that "racialism is not the real problem in South Africa" and whips it as a "terrible mental disease". Here Mr. Nkoana rides two horses at the same time. For instance, on the same page, he quotes from Sobukwe's speech . . . "Our contention is that the Africans are the

only people who, because of their material position can be interested in the material overhaul of the present structure of society . . ." He regards this as the "very genesis of Socialist analysis and cannot be substituted by mere talk of 'class struggle'." Here again are those mystical concepts deep in the heart only of the African.

In an excess of enthusiasm Mr. Nkoana leaps from the cradle of African Nationalism right into the lap of socialism. He rightly eschews "African Socialism" which is a contradiction in terms. Yet he does not attempt the only socialism there is, namely the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels. He spurns the division of South African society into classes. He rejects the term peasantry to define those living on the land, he discards the term working-class as applied to those who work in industry. He rejects the existence of classes, (though of course he does refer to them as such). He would have us believe that there are only masses in the abstract, dangling in mid-air sustained only by the spiritual umbilical cord of his brand of African Nationalism. Where does he stand? Does he secretly believe in "African Socialism"? Why is Sobukwe's statement according to him the "very genesis of Socialist analysis"?

Mr. Nkoana is riding two horses at the same time but alas! to the observer he remains sta-

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tionary for basically he has not moved one whit from his basic standpoint, namely African nationalism, read racialism.

The four principles which he advances as his blueprint for the future development of Southern Africa should be taken as a separate document on its own, for it bears no relation at all to his basic standpoint. One wonders which horse he is riding there.

NONESI  
*All African Convention and  
Unity Movement of  
South Africa, P.O. Box M.24,  
Accra*

in context.

I don't know what Mrs. Tibble's *apparent* regard of me as an authority on African literature has to do with the validity or otherwise of what I say about A. C. Jordan's book. Or does he imply that Mrs. Tibble is trusting an unreliable person? Anyhow, just in case Mr. August thought I had any pretensions myself to being an authority will he feel happy if I said there are many chairs in that row of the eminent that are empty? I am not there at all, and he can easily occupy the South African division.

"In a sense, Jordan's and Achebe's stories are two sides of the same theme. Achebe shows the conflict from the tribal side, and Jordan from the Christian side. In another sense, *The Wrath of the Ancestors* (*Ingqumbo Yeminyana*) is a development of *Things Fall Apart*. In the former, the new values are represented by the 'Westernised' African, while in Achebe's book, the new values are represented by the 'Westerner'. But in neither is there a question of an irreconcilable clash. In certain areas of protest, Christianity is accepted and racial oppression only is attacked by the blacks; in other areas, because the white man's creed has sunk to the level of what E. M. Forster calls 'talkative Christianity', and is being used to justify injustice, it is being challenged. In other cases again,

the black man's and the white man's social values are irreconcilable in varying degrees. These paradoxes, with which Africa teems, will for a long time to come constitute rich literary material for the African artist. Facile rejection and facile acceptance cannot stand 'ironic contemplation'.

"Although Dr. Jordan, who is a lecturer in African studies at the University of Cape Town [now professor of southern Bantu languages at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.—E.M.], is a sophisticate, he was obviously telling a story that could only take place against a rural setting. And as hereditary chieftaincy is now a thing of the past, and the Government has for the last half-century been appointing chiefs who will obey it, in the place of rebels, such a conflict is fast becoming irrelevant except as a symbol of the larger irony in black-white relations."

By the "larger irony" here I mean, as will be clear to anyone who has read my books, the meeting point between rejection and acceptance.

By saying that hereditary chieftaincy is a thing of the past, I am anticipating that it will progressively become irrelevant: if in Verwoerd's time, how much more so in an independent South Africa!

EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE

### Jordan and Achebe

SIR,—Just in case Mr. Collingwood August has not read *The African Image* (p. 203), may I quote the passage to which Mrs. Anne Tibble refers in her book, *African/English Literature* (reviewed by Mr. August, *The New African*, December 1965). This will place the relevant quote, for which Mr. August takes me to task,

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