



## AN APPEAL

SIR,—Who among us has not often felt helpless in the face of government action—or inaction? What American has not felt powerless to affect the institutions supposedly serving "the people"? Who has not sometimes been ashamed of his own country, yet unable to root out the causes of that shame? We believe that you, as an enlightened citizen, have probably experienced such moments of frustration—perhaps even despair.

SNCC believes that dissent does matter—if teeth are put into it. Effective action is possible—if programmed to build communities with genuine power.

From its earliest days, SNCC has maintained that power must flow from the bottom up. Community needs must prevail over political expediency. Institutions should be made to serve people, rather than people serving or being used by institutions.

We have no sure-fire ways to accomplish these ends. But in our past work we have seen how group strength can be mustered to counter the forces of reaction and oppression. This summer, SNCC is conducting a major project in Washington, D.C., where almost a million people, the majority black, have long been denied a voice in government—in their own affairs. In various rural and urban areas we will initiate or continue to build "freedom organizations" geared not only to electoral participation but also the daily economic and social needs of Afro-Americans—most of whom are poor. From these organizations we hope to see emerge a national power base of gathered strength, a new political apparatus. This year, we are also supporting black candidates for crucial local offices in Mississippi and in a special election scheduled for Greene County, Alabama. Some of us will be working in other areas to organize poor whites.

Because we stand not merely for civil rights but for human rights, we have opposed the U.S. war in Vietnam. We are supporting national anti-draft efforts, particularly among black youth. We are also organizing student conferences on a nationwide basis, with the goal of establishing communication between campuses and a true constituency of black students.

We ask you and your readers to support our program—not just for SNCC's sake, but for your own sake in the struggle against powerlessness. Your support is not a matter of "helping" others but

helping yourself as a dissenter. SNCC is a voice, an important voice. Directly or indirectly, it speaks for you too.

Please send a contribution today (to the address below). It is an investment in your political future. It is a guarantee that dissent in this country will stay alive. Thank you—STOKELY CARMICHAEL.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee,  
100 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011.

## MR NKOANA'S HISTORY

SIR,—Mr Nkoana's respect for the facts of South African history (New African—March, 1967) is so slight that readers unfamiliar with them are sure to get several false impressions. May I set the record straight in regard to three issues? (A total overhaul of Mr Nkoana's piece would require an article of similar length).

(1) Mr Nkoana depicts Dr Moroka as a collaborationist who sabotaged the ANC's Programme of Positive Action of 1949. Of Moroka's Youth League-sponsored election to the ANC Presidency in 1949, Mr Nkoana says:

"The fact was overlooked by the Youth League that in spite of his early opposition Dr Moroka had permitted himself to participate in the segregated institutions created under the same laws which were now to be the target of boycott in terms of the Programme."

This inexcusably telescopes the events of several years. In August, 1946, as a result of the Government's reaction to the African mineworkers' strike, the Natives Representative Council (NRC) unanimously adopted a motion—(moved by none other than Dr Moroka)—adjourning itself sine die. This action effectively killed the NRC even for the bogus purposes intended for it by its creators.

Aside from a brief meeting, in November 1946, the NRC did not meet again until January 1949. In the meantime two important developments had occurred. In 1947 the NRC caucus rebuffed an attempt by Smuts to redecorate the institution with some trappings of legislative authority to make it acceptable to the people. The members of the NRC, many of them amongst the most distinguished and widely respected African leaders of the time, wanted power, and proposed machinery of representation which—if accepted—would have given it to them. Secondly, in 1948 the Nationalists came to power on a platform of repressive policy which expressly included the abolition of the NRC. Thus by January 1949 everybody concerned knew that the NRC was dead—its uselessness was the only point of agreement between its members and the Government. The final, formal abolition of the Council was made by the Bantu Authorities Act in 1951. The attendance of Moroka, Matthews et al. at some of the few meetings of the Council in its last two years is therefore more fairly represented as the attendance of unsorrowing mourners at the funeral rites of a dead institution than as unprincipled collaboration. My interpretation is supported by two facts at least: (a) when the Programme of Action was first mooted

in October 1948, the abolition of the NRC was called for; and, (b) it was largely because of his articulate endorsement of the Programme of Action (which included a boycott of the NRC) that Dr Moroka was pushed into the ANC Presidency by the Youth League in December 1949. Thus when Mr Nkoana says of the ANC's Council of Action that "by some curious oversight the Council never selected for boycott the NRC", he is himself curiously guilty of overlooking the fact (which he himself lets slip a few lines later) that the ANC expressly included the NRC in its boycott programme, and that the actions of members of the NRC (many of whom were also leading figures in the ANC) had since 1946 made the institution an unworkable one, which was after all one of the objects of the boycott tactic.

(2) The Defiance Campaign—1952: At its end, Dr Moroka discredited himself only (and not the ANC also, as Mr Nkoana implies) by having a separate Counsel in the trial of the Campaign's leaders and by seeking to establish his moderation. He was quickly repudiated by Congress, which chose Chief Luthuli to replace him. Moreover the Campaign was not "allowed to fizzle out by the leaders who got cold feet as the Government prepared to take retaliatory action". By December 1952 the Government had already taken retaliatory action—new, more vicious legislation including lashes for defiers, the banning of over 50 leaders (with all the disruptive consequences for the organisation of the Campaign that can be easily imagined) and widespread police brutality. In this setting of mounting bloodshed and weakened organisation, the leaders who called off the Campaign cannot be accused of cowardice—after all, many of them (e.g. Dr Dadoo) had often known jail previously, and many of the same leaders have subsequently faced jail, even death, with exemplary courage. It ill becomes an exile in the safety of a London office to impugn the integrity of the people's leaders when so many of them are locked up, suffering, and unable to reply.

(3) The origins of the Freedom Charter. Mr Nkoana would have us believe that the Freedom Charter was the work of "confused authors", living "in the White suburbs of Johannesburg", "with their ears cocked to Moscow but their hearts in the privileges they enjoy as Whites". The difficulty with this theory is that there is no evidence to support it. Worse, the suggestion that the Freedom Charter was "foisted on" the Congress of the People is insulting in its implied estimation of the political acumen of the thousands present on that occasion. My impression is that the Charter was the outcome of a whole series of meetings held and pamphlets distributed all over the country in the preceding couple of years, culminating in an agreed statement of popular demands at a widely representative gathering, in June 1955. One of the most interesting pamphlets that preceded the Charter was one entitled "South Africa's Way Forward", by Moses Kotane, published in 1954. In it he argued cogently the case for such a gathering, and anticipated many of the demands that were it

anticipated many of the demands that were later embodied in the Charter. I do not suggest that he

fathered the Charter (if he did, Mr Nkoana's white privilege theory still doesn't fit!), but that he, like other African leaders of the time, helped to formulate the deeply felt needs of the disfranchised masses. Thus it is not entirely rhetorical to say that the African, Indian and Coloured people themselves created the Charter.

Now it may be significant to Mr Nkoana, anxious to find the red Russian hand in the authorship of the Charter, that Mr Kotane was for years an executive member of the Communist Party of South Africa. But it is also significant that Mr Kotane was for years an executive member of the ANC, until banned by the Government in 1952 (for his role in the Defiance Campaign). That he had not ceased to be an important and representative figure by 1954 when he wrote his pamphlet is clear from the fact that he was one of the ANC and South African representatives at the Bandung Conference the following year. Where were the Africanists at Bandung?

On one aspect alone of the history of the liberatory movement in the 'Fifties do I find Mr Nkoana persuasive and reliable, and that is his description of the Africanists' reaction to the Treason Trial. They regarded it, says Mr Nkoana in a singularly revealing passage, with "anger mixed with sadness because they regarded the Government action against the freedom charterists as an uncalled-for political build-up for the latter." It's rather like a spectator at a boxing match complaining that neither of the contestants takes him seriously as a fighter! — A. K. BROOKS.

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## MRS CONDE'S CRITICISM

SIR - In the December 1966 issue of the New African Mrs. Conde's "Notes on West African Literature in French" contains so many inaccuracies that it needs some clarification and protest. Firstly, she is the victim of a translator - I suspect - who insists on giving Abdoulaye Sadju the 'particule nobiliaire' reserved for remnants of the French nobility such as de Gaulle. But she herself must take the blame for such enormities as the claim that Oyono wrote "Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba", that 'Toundi-in "Une vie de boy" (a) wears glasses, (b) has a mistress. I wonder, could she give the chapter and verse?

These, though, are minor points. Her contention that Francophone Africa needs a Chinua Achebe is, to be polite, a gross simplification which ignores the main politico-social issues involved. Achebe is a product of a particular politico-social complex called Nigeria and could not be transferred to another complex called A.O.F. The French-speaking writers are silent for a variety of reasons: who are they now to write for, which are the dominant social problems of these emergent social orders and which are simply passing? In an early period of social development it is often difficult to differentiate. Equally, there was never in Nigeria such commitment among writers to an ideology as is found in French-speaking West Africa. There is obviously cause for some questioning

when 'negritude' loses its essential 'raison d'etre' and has to turn from protest to reconstruction. Social reconstruction is no real topic for literature as Simone de Beauvoir points out and as was made obvious in the "Ghanaian Times" in the early sixties.

While Mrs. Conde fears to shock when claiming that Laye's idealised Guinea never existed she is, I'm afraid, simply demonstrating her profound ignorance of the processes of creative writing. Does a child not tend to live in an idealised world, a world of mystery where the imagination is as important as political awareness? But the implied contrast between this idealised world which is - obviously - the best of all possible worlds, and the world into which the 'educated African' is inevitably driven by the Colonial administration enhances the tragic leitmotif which runs throughout the novel. This creation and presentation of an ideal is part of Laye's technique.

Her naivety is again apparent in Mrs. Conde's approach to "L'Aventure ambiguë". To accuse Kane of taking sides with the 'neo-colonialists' is nothing less than ridiculous. She is obviously unaware of the fact that Kane had written this novel by 1952 and withheld publication until the political and social climate of independence could assimilate it. He makes it perfectly obvious, in fact, that he belongs to those who have lost the struggle but who are still attempting to redefine their bases.

Mrs. Conde then confuses Sembene Ousmane's novels and accuses him of choosing out-dated themes. The most important aspect of "L'Harmattan" is, in vol. 1 "Referendum" that Ousmane is continuing to write in a pan West-African perspective after independence has fragmented the useful, geo-political entity of A.O.F. ("Les Bouts de bois de Dieu" and "L'Harmattan" are not Ousmane's only two novels despite the impression given.)

Mrs. Conde also complains of the lack of epic works such as are found in Russian literature and nowhere else. Which is to claim a strange primacy for Russian literature. Had she read Hazoume's "Doguicimi" or Boni's "Crepuscule du temps ancien" she would know that Niane's "Soundjata" is not the first and only historical novel written by French-speaking Africans.

The final section of this article deals with four poets - ignoring the many others. While not wishing to criticise Mrs. Conde's value judgements since they are purely subjective, her literary criteria are of the strangest. In this section, more clearly than in any other, Mrs. Conde criticises in political terms. This is deplorable. Literature exists within a political framework but it need neither be dependent on this framework nor a straightforward reflection of it. This attempt to force creative literature 'in toto' into a crude pseudo-marxist ideological pattern does the greatest disservice possible both to African writers, to the

development of a valid critical approach to literature and to critics such as Mrs. Conde. - A.C. Brench  
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## IS TRIBALISM A DISEASE?

SIR - It seems fashionable to speak of tribalism as a "disease", something unfortunate which must be wiped out, in the interests of nationalism. Is not this rather short-sighted? Europeans have been discarding nationalism, which ended by driving us into a series of hideous wars; some of us try to think in terms of the whole world. But we are very short of the smaller community in which people feel a warmth and trust which can only extend to a group of a few thousand people. A Constituency may give this feeling to its M.P. and to a small group of his immediate helpers. You find it in one of the islands off the western coast of Scotland. But it is never so warm and close as in a tribe.

I write this as someone who has experienced the loneliness of the European, and also the togetherness of an African tribe. At the moment I have a fellow tribesman staying with me; he is learning about cattle, the making of fodder crops and general modern techniques of husbandry, and he is thinking, not merely in terms of our tribe, but in terms of making a viable and prosperous country: in terms of a really independent Botswana. This is how I think too, all the more because it is only through a flourishing cattle industry, exporting in all directions, that Botswana can stop itself from becoming a rather superior Bantustan.

And yet there is more to it than that. Because we are Bakgatla as well as being Batswana, there is a trust and confidence between me and my fellow tribesmen, which bridge the awkward moments when one is not quite sure of friendship; we start, so to speak, ten up in the game. I feel this all the time when I am out in Mochudi, our tribal capital, though I am almost equally at home among other tribes. In Botswana all speak the same language, have the same customs. But tribal rivalry over peaceful pursuits, not to speak of football or singing, is surely a good thing and will lead us quickly into the use of new technologies. We have to re-think the tribal structure, discarding what holds back knowledge and the widening of opportunities, but keeping the sense of something more important than the individual, something, in fact, which shows the individual what he or she is, in the deepest sense. Europe and America search for human identity; the African tribesman or woman knows it. Is this something we can easily throw away? I think not. I know what it has meant to me to be one of a tribe: the increased capacity for love and courage and understanding. It is beyond price. - Naomi Mitchison  
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