

THE NATAL
SOCIETY
CENTRAL



LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING

No. 25. June, 1957

**AFTER THE COLONIAL
REVOLUTION**

MICHAEL HARMEL



**BANTU EDUCATION GOES
TO UNIVERSITY**

-3. JUN 1957 NELSON MANDELA

THE NATAL SOCIETY

CENTRAL



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

LET'S HAVE IT!

LIBERATION wants contributions
— two kinds: **ARTICLES** on
political, scientific, literary
and other matters of general
interest;

DONATIONS to keep this little
magazine going.

If you can't give one, give
the other.

Send all contributions to

LIBERATION

Box 10120

Johannesburg

Liberation

A Journal of Democratic Discussion

No. 25, June, 1957

One Shilling

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial — The Weakest Link	1
Bantu Education Goes to University, by Nelson Mandela	7
After the Colonial Revolution, by Michael Harmel	11
The Reichstag Fire Ill, by L. Bernstein	18

Editorial

THE WEAKEST LINK

How strong is the Nationalist Government? The question is asked everywhere; and everywhere it is differently answered. By the Nationalists themselves it is claimed that the Government is stronger than ever before, more firmly entrenched behind the seemingly unshakeable battalions of ja-broers in the swollen senate. By despairing opponents in other countries the government is compared with the Hitler regime, which kept its deadly grip on Germany till almost the last street had been pounded to rubble by foreign armies. And by wishful thinking United Party politicians and press it is said to be bursting at the seams through its own internal dissension.

All such answers are wide of the mark. The United Party clutches at every slender straw in the hope of keeping its head above water; the Wassenaar revolt against the Nationalist Party, and the faltering Dutch Reformed Church uneasiness over the "church clause" of the Native Laws Amendment Bill are presented as evidence that the edifice of Nationalism is disintegrating, its ranks split from top to bottom and its foundations wrecked by upheaval. Such claims, made in the petty party-point-scoring tradition of parliamentary politics in South Africa, cannot be taken seriously.

But the incidents that give rise to these extravagant claims cannot be ignored. The Wassenaar revolt is a first tiny ripple on the surface of Nationalist unity, revealing some uneasiness and discontent in Nationalist ranks; but all Wassenaar's speeches since the break reveal also that the uneasiness arises mainly from frictions over personalities and scarcely at all from basic policy differences. Wassenaar, the apostle of English-Afrikaner unity to which every demagogue from both United Party and Nationalist Party platforms pays lip-service, has nothing more to offer than the old platitudes of "white supremacy with justice to the native." Concretely, his policy is Nationalism with its anti-British character diluted; or — if you will — United Party policy with its anti-republican jingoism discarded. Such deviations from South African orthodoxy neither weaken nor strengthen the democratic opposition to Nationalism, nor mark the beginning of the government's end.

The first, faltering assertion of independence from the Government made by the Dutch Reformed Church is of more significance, even if the assertion was made hesitantly and semi-secretly, and even though the Church leaders rapidly stepped back into line when the Government gave 'assurances' which assured nobody except the church leaders themselves. A first, microscopic crack has developed in the unholy trinity of party, state and church; and one which will widen, not only because Nationalist ambitions leave no room for those who would 'render to God the things which are God's', but also because the D.R.C., with the largest number of African members of all the European missionary churches, becomes increasingly torn between the needs to maintain those members and yet bolster up their government enemy and persecutor.

SURFACE SYMPTOMS

There can be little doubt that it is the Nationalist ambition to entrench themselves as securely in power as did Hitler. But those who compare the strength and stability of the Verwoerd-Strydom clique with the regime of Hitler are being led astray by surface symptoms. It is true that all the paraphernalia of the Nazi state — the Gestapo, the tame judiciary, the unrestricted power to rule by decree, the racial categories and persecutions, the master-race creed — all these are being faithfully rebuilt in South Africa on the Hitler pattern. But these are the surface trappings and not the essence. The strength and stability of the Hitler state rested on two props; on the indoctrination of the masses and on their acquiescence and even support for the regime which was established at home; and on the military, political and economic support which was secured from the imperialist world outside. It is here that the similarity between South Africa and Hitler Germany ends.

South African fascism has feet of clay, because it has failed to indoctrinate the mass of the people with the ideology of fascism. Although the massed ranks of the self-constituted Nationalist majority in the Senate, and the steady majority in Parliament gives the Government the surface appearance of solid, majority backing, Parliament and the Senate together represent — at best — only a half of a one-fifth minority of the people, — at best, only one-fourth of the four main national groups which make up the population. Where the Hitler government stood by virtue of the silence or the support and backing of the German people, Strydom's stands

by virtue of a tatterdemalion army of hired policemen, petty bureaucrats and native commissioners, themselves drawn from that same tiny minority of the population, and acting amidst the hatred, opposition and open hostility of the masses of the people. A state founded on such unstable ground is at all times unstable, torn by inner doubts, ripe with the seeds of its own collapse. The only weapon in its armour is law; and the force that backs the law.

NO FASCISM BY LAW

"We cannot take humanity to heaven with laws." The happy phrase is Mr. Swart's. Nor can one take humanity to fascism with laws, as the Nationalist Government has discovered. There are laws on the statute book cancelling out civil liberties. Meetings of the opponents of fascism have been attacked or outlawed by the Riotous Assemblies Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, the Natives Urban Areas Act, by municipal ordinances and by traffic bye-laws. And still the opposition meet and organise. Each Parliamentary session adds another law to seal the loophole of the last; this year it is the Native Laws Amendment Act. But fascism is not built by laws.

There are laws placed on the statute books by the Nationalist government to outlaw opposition organisations and suppress opposition newspapers — the Suppression of Communism Act, the Public Safety Act. There are laws to imprison opposition activists without trial, to deport them, to restrict their movements — the Native Administration Act, the Natives Urban Areas Amendment Act, the Riotous Assemblies Act. There are laws to break movements of popular protest, the Criminal Laws Amendment Act, the Transport Amendment Act, the Natives Settlement of Disputes Act, the Industrial Conciliation Act. There are laws to raise the police above the law, laws to cut off all printed matter entering the country from abroad, laws to permit the Government to rule without laws. But fascism is not built by laws. Still the opponents of fascism, the majority of the people, meet, read, speak, discuss, protest and organise against the government of fascism.

Nothing illustrates more clearly the dilemma of the Nationalist Government than its successive, futile steps to suppress the national liberation movement. In 1950 it was hoped that the Suppression of Communism Act and the outlawing of the Communist Party would meet the need. Failure. The Communist Party vanished but the Congress movement flourished. Communists were listed, banned from organisations and from meetings; but the Defiance Campaign raised the whole anti-government movement to new heights. In 1954, there was the Criminal Laws Amendment Act to smash the Defiance Campaign, followed by prosecution of the Campaign leaders, and by arbitrary Suppression Act and Riotous Assemblies Act bannings of a multitude of liberation leaders. Again failure. There followed the Congress of the People, drawing in the Coloured and European opposition for the first time, forging a stronger unity against the Government than ever before. More bannings, mass police raids, intimidation and secret police. And again failure. In December 1956, the arrest of 156 leading figures of the liberation movement, a single swoop on a charge of treason, designed to immobilise them all for untold months, to restrict them all from meetings as a condition of their bail: the trump

card to cripple the liberation movement, and to persuade its several limbs to wither and die. Again failure. With the 156 in jail or in court, the struggle against the Government rose again, in the mass demonstrations at the Treason Court, and later in the mighty, and victorious bus boycotts on the Reef, Port Elizabeth, Worcester. And already, with the Treason Trial still not at its half-way mark, there is talk of new laws to outlaw the Congresses and silence the opposition.

MASS HOSTILITY

Fascism is not built by laws. In the end, as Hitler demonstrated to all who seek to follow along his road, it depends on naked force and mass terror. That lesson, too, the South African Government has learned and taken to heart. Force and terror is an essential element of the fascist state they seek to entrench. But there is a difference; the people are not with them. In Germany, a simple Gestapo or stormtroop expedition against an enemy group of Jews, or communists, or trade union militants passed off easily, quietly, amidst a population which either joined in the strong-arm sport, or acquiesced, or applauded, or merely looked the other way in cowardly shame. If there were broken heads, they were always amongst the enemies of the state, never amongst the bully-boys in the brown shirts.

Not so South Africa. Here, everywhere, and in everything, the government has to reckon with the mass hostility of the people. Every simple administrative action designed to tighten the screws, to intimidate or terrorise the 'enemies of the state' threatens to become a full-scale pitched battle, with the forces of fascism heavily outnumbered. A routine police raid on an African hostel in Johannesburg, a search for 'trespassers' and illicit liquor flares up in seconds to pitched battle, with police shooting blindly into a hostile crowd, while retreating under heavy counterfire of stones and brickbats. A routine administrative deposition of a tribal chieftain, (already in government eyes no more nor less than minor and temporary civil servants), blazes out into mass tribal resistance, with incipient guerilla skirmishes, summary revolutionary trial of 'enemies of the people' and a mass return to the countryside of kinsmen from the towns, coming to strengthen the fight against the government. South African fascism can command an overwhelming force of arms. But it beats against and breaks itself on the force of a people united against it..

Nor can the Nationalist Government draw strength and comfort from international ties and backers. Hitler Germany was financed, aided and abetted by reactionary circles amongst the ruling class of all the imperialist nations — Britain, France, America, Italy, Japan and others — for a single purpose; for the purpose of building up Germany's military might, and launching it in full-scale war against socialism in the U.S.S.R. For this sinister — and in the end suicidal — purpose, nothing was too much for Hitler to ask and be given, the Saar, the Sudetenland, Austria, Czechoslovakia. Much as the Nationalist Government may seek to inherit the Hitler role, history is against them. Imperialism is not what it was in the Hitler age. Such teeth as are still left in the dying system are still, it is true, bared against the enemy of socialism; and military, strategic and financial aid is still given to the running dogs who are prepared, against the moral lessons of Hitler's and Germany's destruction, to lend their

people as cannon-fodder for military adventures against the expanded socialist world. But South Africa is not to be counted seriously amongst the foremost contenders for such aid. Strategically we lie outside the main cockpits of a new anti-Communist war; and militarily, the deep chasm between the people of South Africa and its government makes it unlikely that military aid, even if given to the Nationalist government, will ever be used for any more bloody purpose than the maintenance of that government in power against its own people. For the sinister anti-socialist military adventures of today, imperialism looks to the more strategically placed and the less powerfully challenged riff-raff that cling to power in Formosa, South Korea, Japan and West Germany.

AFRO-ASIAN BLOC

But even the most reactionary circles of Western imperialism have to reckon with realities other than those contained in the rigid concepts of strategy and manpower. Calculations of policy have to be based on the realities of life, however difficult they may be to swallow. And the realities of life are that imperialism, as a world-wide system of colonial subjection, has declined till it is but a shadow of its Hitler-age self. Half the former colonial world has passed into the world of independent peoples' states, some socialist, some peoples' democratic moving slowly towards socialism, some bourgeois, capitalist. A new force in world politics has emerged, the Afro-Asian bloc of powers, holding the balance of world power between the lands of socialism and the lands of imperialism, reflected in the balance of voting strength in the United Nations Organisation. This new world force is not only a powerful weight in the world balance of peace and war, but is also a great lever for the national liberation and independence of all surviving colonial states, and oppressed nations. Imperialism, willy-nilly, is being forced by the realities of life no less than by self-interest to seek and find a way to peaceful co-existence, trade and commercial relations with this new world force.

The Nationalist visionaries dream of themselves as battle-scarred Horatios, boldly holding the bridge of imperialism and of white man's subjugation of the black, against the world. But these are dreams. Life passes the dreamers by. The government which, three years ago, fulminated and threatened against the fearful prospect of what it calls 'native states' in Africa has been forced to bow before the march of world events. Ghana, the first independent 'native state' in British Africa exists; the Nationalist government, albeit grudgingly, recognises its existence, and moves towards an exchange of diplomatic representatives, even while the initiative in convening an 'All-Africa Conference' passes from the hands of the South African white supremacists, who talked of it two years ago, to the hands of Nkrumah.

AMERICAN HANDOUTS

There are still crumbs to be had from the rich imperial pickings. The Nationalist Government still touts for, and will, no doubt, receive, crumbs from the American imperialist handout, in exchange for continued action against "Communism"; that is to say, in exchange for its gendarme action to ensure that the rising revolt of Africa against imperialism is strangled

before it goes too far, before it becomes infected with the radical ideas of socialism, of peace and of friendly relations with the East. But these are crumbs. They are incapable of cementing over the weak and cracking foundations of South African fascism. There are minor pleasures to be gained by Nationalist fanatics, too, from 'tweaking the tail of the British lion', from abolishing the singing of 'God Save the Queen' or from hauling down the Union Jack. But these are poor substitute, and yet the only substitute possible, for the grandiose role they seek but will never play.

How strong is the Nationalist Government? There is no measure of political strength, no unit, horse-power or ergs or volts in which to measure. One of the world's greatest statesmen, answering the question why Russia became the first socialist state, answered that Russia was the weakest link in the chain of imperialism. There in Russia, all the internal strains and stresses, conflicts and antagonisms of the year 1917 were at their highest. The chain snapped where it was most strongly stressed, at its weakest link.

It might be too much to claim that of all the world, it is here in South Africa, in the year 1957, that the chain of imperialism is at its weakest; that here all the conflicts and contradictions between imperialist oppressors and the people struggling for liberation are sharpest and most acute. But that can not be far from the truth. South Africa is a weak link in the chain; its government holds on by the most tenuous of grips. But its people stands like a rock. Those who have gone over to the other side, to the side of the government, can be counted on the fingers — Cyprian ka Dinizulu, P. Q. Vundla, a handful, the few grains of sand that time erodes from any rock. The people stand like a rock; and while they do so, the Nationalist Government, by every new act of desperation, wears itself out and is ripe for the splitting.

GOOD THINGS COMING

An ambitious programme of articles has been planned for future issues of LIBERATION. A Symposium "After the Nationalists?" from different viewpoints; important contributions on trade union policy and the "Economics of Afrikaner Nationalism" are among proposed features. Make sure of your copy by subscribing or renewing your subscription now (form on back cover).

BANTU EDUCATION GOES TO UNIVERSITY

— by NELSON MANDELA

The Nationalist Government have frequently denied that they are a fascist Government inspired by the theories of the National-Socialist Party of Hitlerite Germany. Yet the declaration they make, the laws they pass and the entire policy they pursue clearly confirm this point. It is interesting to compare the colonial policy of the Hitlerite Government as outlined by the leading German theoretician on the subject Dr. Gunther Hecht, who was regarded as an expert on colonial racial problems in the office of the German National-Socialist Party, published a pamphlet in 1938 entitled "The Colonial Question and Racial Thought" in which he outlined the racial principles which were to govern the future treatment of Africans in German Colonies.

He declared that the German Government would not preach equality between Africans and Europeans. Africans would under no circumstances be allowed to leave German Colonies for Europe. No African would be allowed to become a German citizen. African schools would not be permitted to preach any "European matter" as that would foster a belief amongst them that Europe was the very peak of cultural development and they would thus lose faith in their own culture and background. Local culture would be fostered. Higher schools and universities would be closed to them. Special theatres, cinemas and other places of amusement and recreation would be erected for them. Hecht concluded the pamphlet by pointing out that the programme of the German Government would stand in sharp contrast to the levelling and anti-racial teachings of equality of the Western Colonial powers.

In this country the Government preaches the policy of baasskap which is based upon the supremacy in all matters of the whites over the non-whites. Under this policy fundamental human rights are denied to the non-whites. They are subjected to extremely stringent regulations both in regard to their movement within the country as well as in regard to overseas travel lest they should come into contact with ideas that are in conflict with the herrenvolk policies of the Government. Through the Bantu Authorities Act and similar measures the African people are being broken up into small tribal units, isolated one from the other, in order to prevent the rise and development of national consciousness amongst them and to foster a narrow and insulated tribal outlook.

During the Parliamentary debate on the second reading of the Bantu Education Bill in September, 1953, the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, who studied in German Universities, outlined the educational policy of his Government. He declared that racial relations could not improve if the wrong type of education was given to Africans. They could not improve if the result of African education was the creation of a frustrated people who, as a result of the education they received, had expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa did not allow to be fulfilled; when it created people who were trained for professions not open to them; when there were people amongst them who had received a form of cultural training which strengthened their desire for white-collar occupations. Above all, good racial relations could not exist when the education was given under the control of people who believed in racial equality. It was, therefore, necessary, that African Education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the State. The Minister concluded by declaring that if his department controlled African Education it would know for which type of higher profession the African could be trained, where he would be able to make a living with his knowledge.

The Bantu Education Bill has now become law and it embodies all the obnoxious doctrines enunciated by the Minister in the parliamentary debate referred to above. An inferior type of education, known as Bantu Education, and designed to relegate Africans to a position of perpetual servitude in a baasskap society, is now in force in almost all African primary schools throughout the country and will be introduced in all secondary and high schools as from next year. The Separate University Education Bill, now before Parliament, is a step to extend Bantu Education to the field of higher education.

In terms of this Bill the Minister is empowered to establish, maintain and conduct University Colleges for non-whites. The students to be admitted to the University Colleges must be approved by the Minister. As from the 1st January, 1958, no non-white students who were not previously registered shall be admitted to a European University without the consent of the Minister. In its original form the Bill provided for the transfer of the control and management of the University College of Fort Hare and of the Medical School for Africans at Wentworth to the Government and all employees in these institutions would become Government employees. Though this provision has now been dropped, for technical reasons, for the time being, it will no doubt be introduced later

By notice in the Gazette the Minister can vest the control of Fort Hare in the Native Affairs Department. The Government is empowered to change the name of the college. For example, he can call it the HENDRIK FRENCH VERWOERD University College for Bantu persons. The Minister is entitled to dismiss any member of the staff for misconduct which includes public adverse comment upon the administration of any department of the Government or Province and propagating ideas or taking part in or identifying himself with any propaganda or activities calculated to impede, obstruct or undermine the activities of any Government Department.

As soon as the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament no mixed university in the country will be permitted to enrol new non-European students any more. The mixed English universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand and

Rhodes will thus be compelled to fall in line with the Afrikaans universities of Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch and the Orange Free State whose doors are closed to non-Europeans.

As far as Africans are concerned the main purpose of the Bill is to extend the principle of Bantu Education to the field of higher education. Non-Europeans who are trained at mixed universities are a menace to the racial policies of the Government. The friendship and interracial harmony that is forged through the admixture and association of various racial groups at the mixed universities constitute a direct threat to the entire policy of apartheid and baasskap and the Bill has been enacted to remove this threat. The type of universities the Bill envisages will be nothing more than tribal colleges, controlled by party politicians and based upon the doctrine of the perpetual supremacy of the whites over the blacks, such colleges will be used by the Government to enforce its political ideology at university level.

They will bear no resemblance whatsoever, to modern universities. Not free enquiry but indoctrination is their purpose, and the education they will give will not be directed towards the unleashing of the creative potentialities of the people but towards preparing them for perpetual mental and spiritual servitude to the whites. They will be permitted to teach only that which strictly conforms to the racial policies of the Nationalist Government. Degrees and diplomas obtained at these colleges will be held in contempt and ridicule throughout the country and abroad and will probably not be recognised outside South Africa.

The decision of the Government to introduce university segregation is prompted not merely by the desire to separate non-European from European Students. Its implications go much further than this for the Bill is a move to destroy the "open" university tradition which is universally recognised throughout the civilised world and which has up till now been consistently practised by leading universities in the country for years. For centuries universities have served as centres for the dissemination of learning and knowledge to all students irrespective of their colour or creed. In multi-racial societies they serve as centres for the development of the cultural and spiritual aspects of the life of the people. Once the Bill is passed our Universities can no longer serve as centres for the development of the cultural and spiritual aspects of the entire nation.

The Bill has aroused extensive popular indignation, and opposition throughout the country as well as abroad. Students and lecturers, liberals and conservatives, progressives, democrats, public men and women of all races and with varying political affiliations have been stirred into action. A former Chief Justice of the Union, Mr. Van der Sandt Centlivres, in a speech delivered at a lunch meeting of the University Club in Cape Town on the 11th February this year and reported in the Rand Daily Mail of the 12th of the same month, said:

"I am not aware of any university of real standing in the outside world which closes its doors to students on the ground of the colour of their skins. The great universities of the world welcome students from other countries whatever the colour of their skins. They realise that the different outlook which these students bring with them advances the field of knowledge in human relations in the international sphere and contributes to their own culture."

The attack on University freedom is a matter of vital importance and constitutes a grave challenge to all South Africans. It is perhaps because they fully appreciate this essential fact that more and more people are participating in the campaign against the introduction of academic segregation in the universities. Students in different parts of the country are staging mammoth demonstrations and protest meetings. Heads of universities, lecturers, men and women of all shades of opinion, have in speeches and articles violently denounced the action of the Government. All this reveals that there are many men and women in this country who are prepared to rally to the defence of traditional rights whenever they are threatened.

But we cannot for one moment forget that we are up against a fascist Government which has built up a massive coercive state apparatus to crush democracy in this country and to silence the voice of all those who cry out against the policy of apartheid and baasskap. All opposition to the Nationalist Government is being ruthlessly suppressed through the Suppression of Communism Act and similar measures. The Government, in defiance of the people's wishes, is deporting people's leaders from town and country in the most merciless and shameful manner. All rights are being systematically attacked. The right to organise, to assembly and to agitate has been severely fettered. Trade Unions and other organisations are being smashed up. Even the sacred right of freedom of religious worship, which has been observed and respected by governments down the centuries, is now being tampered with. And now the freedom of our universities is seriously threatened. Racial persecution of the non-whites is being intensified every day. The rule of force and violence, of terror and coercion, has become the order of the day.

Fascism has become a living reality in our country and its defeat has become the principal task of the entire people of South Africa. But the fight against the fascist policies of the Government cannot be conducted on the basis of isolated struggles. It can only be conducted on the basis of the united fight of the entire people of South Africa against all attacks of the Nationalists on traditional rights whether these attacks are launched through parliament and other state organs or whether through extra-parliamentary forms. The more powerful the resistance of the people the less becomes the advance of the Nationalists. Hence the importance of a united front. The people must fight stubbornly and tenaciously and defend every democratic right that is being attacked or tampered with by the Nationalists.

A broad united front of all the genuine opponents of the racial policies of the Government must be developed. This is the path the people should follow to check and repel the advance of fascism in this country and to pave the way for a peaceful and democratic South Africa.

AFTER THE COLONIAL REVOLUTION

— by MICHAEL HARMEL

The spectacular fiasco of British and French imperialism in Egypt may be taken as marking a historical turning-point. The Suez Canal was the last ditch for the West-European colonial system. The great silent revolution of the mid-Twentieth Century, the emancipation of hundreds of millions of non-European peoples from their alien European overlords, has passed the point of no return. True, in accordance with their nature, the imperialists will doubtless attempt to retain what is left of their empire. They will continue expending their resources and spilling blood in order to hold what they have in Africa. They will attempt to secure, through economic penetration and financial control, what their tanks, planes and troops are unable to conquer. The United States of America has fairly openly announced its intention of entering to occupy the "vacuum" left by the departure of its NATO allies from their former colonies.

But these attempts are certain to be frustrated. The process which began in China and India after the Second World War has gone too far and too fast to be stopped. Anti-imperialist solidarity among the victims of colonialism is strong — as witness the historic conference of Bandung. The achievement of self-government by the peoples of the rest of Africa, Asia, and other dependencies, colonies and semi-colonies can no longer be delayed for any length of time.

NEW PROBLEMS FOR COLONIAL LEADERS

So long as foreign rule remains in a country, its people and their leaders are naturally obsessed by a single problem: how to get rid of it. It has been truly said that "A man suffering from national oppression is like a man suffering from cancer — he can think of nothing else."

It follows that nearly all the political energy, organising skill, devotion, courage and sacrifice of the colonial peoples has been absorbed by the struggle for national independence. There seemed to be little purpose in elaborating detailed plans and policies for the morrow of independence, so long as independence itself was at issue. Indeed, there may well have appeared to be dangers in the formulation of detailed plans. A movement for national liberation naturally seeks to gather groups and classes with divergent long-term interests for the common struggle against outside rule. "We have capitalist, working class and peasant elements among us," the argument runs. "Each may have its own conception of the ideal way to

run the country after emancipation. But all of us stand to gain from the expulsion of imperialism. Let us attend to that matter first. Afterwards we can argue about new political and economic foundations. Before we can settle how to run our country, we must first have the power to run it."

There is a measure of truth in this argument. But it is by no means the whole truth. The process of winning national independence is not completed by the formal handing-over of a country's government to a democratically-elected parliament or national assembly. A thousand strings, economic, political, traditional, still tie the former colony to its former masters. Poverty, illiteracy, a servile mentality, outworn tribal and feudal institutions, a deformed and backward economy — all of them the heritage of imperialist rule — drag down the country, prevent its people tasting the fruits of freedom, and endanger its new-won political independence.

Liberation leaders cannot afford to ignore such problems. Unless they have worked out a realistic and clearly-formulated programme of action for the day after self-government they stand in peril of betraying the glowing hopes and aspirations of the masses who fight for freedom, and throwing away the struggles and sacrifices of generations of patriots.

The measure in which the newly-independent countries strike out along a bold and radical programme of social and economic reform will be the measure in which their independence is real and not merely formal and fictitious. The experience of countries such as Pakistan and the Phillipines shows that failure to institute and effect rapid, planned economic development, to raise living and cultural standards of workers and peasants, is accompanied by renewed imperialist control and penetration in the form of conditional "aid" and subjection to unequal military "treaties" in which colonialism is perpetuated in a new guise.

ATTRACTED TO SOCIALISM

Moreover, the process of winning liberation itself is no simple process. The desire for freedom and independence is one thing; its accomplishment another. Experience has proved that victory in the difficult, arduous and complicated struggle for national emancipation demands from the leaders of that struggle a thorough study and knowledge of advanced modern political theory, of the experiences, successes and failures of movements for the emancipation of oppressed nations and classes in other countries.

It is natural that their struggles, studies and hard experiences should influence modern leaders of oppressed nationalities to become strongly attracted towards socialism. Socialist theory, in its essence, is vigorously and radically opposed to imperialism, national oppression or racial ideology in any shape or form. Internationalist and revolutionary in its nature, it holds that the working class in emancipating itself must at the same time emancipate all other subject groups and classes. It would be difficult to overestimate the profound impact of the Russian socialist revolution, with its outspoken anti-imperialist content, upon the awakening millions throughout the colonial world. The consistently anti-colonialist stand of

the socialist countries at UNO and similar bodies has of course made a deep impression wherever people fight for emancipation and self-government.

The trend towards socialist theory also springs out of the practical experiences of movements for national freedom in many colonial countries. Such movements were often founded many years ago by middle-class intellectuals and professional people. Usually constituted more or less as debating chambers along Western "parliamentary" lines, they confined themselves to dignified protests, memoranda and deputations. They had little conception of mass struggle and action, and no intentions of leading any such thing. They believed that an appeal to reason and humanitarian feelings of the imperial powers would be effective in securing reforms, for they neither demanded nor believed in the possibility of self government. Such methods proved entirely ineffective. It was only when new, usually socialist-inclined young leaders, entered these organisations, strongly stressing the need to arouse and mobilise the masses of workers and peasants, and advancing dynamic slogans of independence and self-government, that the national movements advanced towards their striking successes of the post-war years.

TWO PATHS — ONE GOAL

In their irresistible advance towards independence, which weakened imperialism has been unable to check, the colonial countries of Asia and Africa which have achieved political independence over the past decade have followed two main paths of advance. In the case of China, Viet Nam, and Korea the anti-imperialist movement was led by Communist and Workers' Parties which drew their inspiration from the teachings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, adapted of course to the special historical and local factors of each country. In the case of India, Indonesia, Burma and other countries, the movement was headed by predominantly nationalist and middle class organisations, though Marxist and workers' leaders played important roles.

These differences have been carried forward in the differing internal policies carried out in these two groups of countries in the period since their gaining of political independence. Full information is lacking to make any sort of detailed examination of these various differences, which would indeed be highly instructive. Despite this lack of full information, however, it is possible to discern certain main patterns and tendencies.

Before examining their differences, however, it would be well to emphasise certain striking similarities of all the emergent countries of Asia and Africa, a common outlook so strikingly revealed at the historic Bandung Conference. Although this common outlook can be summed up in the word "anti-colonialism", the word hardly suffices to describe the overwhelming solidarity and one-ness of purpose shared by the leaders of hundreds of millions of people, whatever their wide diversity of political outlook, ranging from Nasser to Mao Tse-Tung. All of them stand at the head of newly-formed states, determined to consolidate, maintain and fully realise their hard-won independence; to wipe out the legacy of backwardness left by imperialism; to develop their country's human and natural resources as rapidly as possible.

It is in the methods by which they propose to gain these ends, rather than in the ends themselves, that we must seek the differences that show themselves in the newly-independent states.

NATIONALISATION NOT THE KEY ISSUE

“Nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange,” is the way socialism (or as they prefer to call it, the “co-operative commonwealth”) is defined in the aims of the British Labour Party. The South African Labour Party has a similar formulation. Transformation of privately-owned capital resources into common property is of course, as is well known, a vital and important part of socialist doctrine. But it is by no means the whole of socialist doctrine, nor is it confined to socialists. The South African Railways and Harbours are state-owned and operated but that by no means implies that the various Union Governments which decided and continued, from time to time, to control and operate them are, in any sense of the world, socialist. Every modern Government has, through the logic of events, had to transfer certain services to public ownership. Only in the United States of America, with its fanatical devotion to “private enterprise” (where as a matter of fact the big monopolies practically own and control the State) do we find such vital services as light and power and telephones still run by private concerns. And even in America the Government runs the Post Office. These publicly-owned services by no means constitute socialism, or even steps in that direction.

Modern scientific socialism, as explained by all its leading thinkers, does not consist of a single dogma about “nationalisation” or anything else. It is rather a broadly conceived approach to the problems of social development and change, seeing in history as in nature, inner conflicts as the key to growth; finding in the contradiction between historically-evolved classes (which in turn derive from the different relationships of each class to the principal means of production) the key to human progress.

It is particularly futile to attempt to seek the differences between socialists and non-socialists in colonial countries by their approach to this question of nationalisation alone, for the need for some degree of nationalisation is inevitably accepted by all colonial leaders.

Alien imperialism has its principal means of domination, exploitation and control in colonies precisely through its ownership of the principal means of production — mineral resources, plantations, and other resources. All colonial patriots, whether Right or Left, capitalists or workers, must if they are at all clear-sighted and earnest seek to wrest these resources from foreign control and restore them to their rightful owners. And the only sensible means of doing this (for the colonial masses could hardly be expected to fight to transfer their countries' resources into the hands of local private capitalists!) is nationalisation. When Nasser nationalises the Canal, or Indonesia the Dutch rubber-plantations, this is not done out of any abstract adherence to the doctrines of Karl Marx, but because it is an obvious, glaring necessity if independence is to be anything more than an empty symbol.

Similarly, to take an analogous example, when our own Freedom Charter speaks of the need to transform monopoly-owned resources into public property, it is not because the framers and supporters of the Charter are all socialists (they are not by any means), but simply because all the other provisions of the Charter, looked at from any realistic point of view, are bound to be ineffective, illusory and unthinkable, so long as the keys to the country's economy remain in the hands of the present gold- and land-monopolists who, in their hunger for cheap labour and through their commanding influence, are responsible for all the ills which beset our land and which the Charter seeks to cure.

CHINA AND INDIA

It is therefore not merely in nationalisation but in question of general approach that we must examine the differences between the two paths of development in the newly-independent countries.

China is not yet a fully socialist country. Private capitalism is not prohibited; indeed, within certain well-defined limits it is encouraged. Yet it is plain to any unbiassed observer that the path of development differs not only in degree but also in its nature from that followed, say, in India.

In China, unlike India, all the principal big industrial enterprises and all banks and financial institutions are State-owned. A far-reaching programme of land-reforms has been carried out in the countryside, and the vast parasitic landlordism, typical of colonial Asia has been eliminated. The country is consciously moving towards socialism, through a sweeping programme of reforms, of great and imaginative construction projects, which have won the enthusiastic co-operation of the masses of the people.

We cannot account for these differences merely by pointing to divergencies of outlook among the various individuals who head the newly-liberated countries. Socialism, as pointed out above, has exerted a tremendous influence over two generations of colonial people, both the leading intelligentsia and the masses. It is no accident that nearly all the outstanding figures in the new ex-colonial states — men like Nehru of India, Nkrumah of the Gold Coast, Bandanaraike of Ceylon, U Nu of Burma — are socialists.

In his "Autobiography", Jawaharlal Nehru writes that Marx: "seems to me to have possessed quite an extraordinary degree of insight into social phenomena, and this insight was apparently due to the scientific method he adopted. This method, applied to past history as well as current events, helps us in understanding them far more than any other method of approach."

Kwame Nkrumah, as is well known, has also proclaimed on a number of occasions his adherence to Marxist socialism.

"Capitalism is too complicated a system for a newly-independent nation," he writes in his autobiography "Ghana," "Hence the need for socialism."

Yet the fact is that in India today plans for economic progress are steadily blocked by the powerful local vested interests which have grown up in the country, which have financial ties with foreign imperialism and whose leaders enjoy an important role in the counsels of the dominant Congress Party. Liberation has not brought about a marked improvement in the condition of India's millions of workers and peasants. I do not wish to give the impression that India's emancipation has meant nothing to the common people. Emancipation from alien imperialism has opened the door to undreamt of advances for the nation. But these glorious prospects must await a far more radical and dynamic Government policy if they are to be realised.

GHANA

Similarly, in Ghana Dr. Nkrumah's statement to Cedric Belfrage, that the country's economy "has not been penetrated and dominated by imperialism" contrasts strangely with his admission that "foreign concerns control gold and diamond mining and commodity imports" (he should have added banking and finance, and also the domination of Ghana's main export trade, cocoa, by Lever Brothers.) All he can point to as being controlled by local enterprise is retail trade and peasant cocoa farming.

Despite the Ghana Prime Minister's assurance that his country will find its own road to socialism, there seems to be little emphasis at this stage on the sweeping economic reforms which would be an essential preliminary to the taking of that road.

Both Nkrumah and Nehru are outstandingly capable men, far over-towering in stature the contemporary mediocrities who head, for example, the British, French or American Governments. Their ability and sincerity are beyond question. How, then, can we account for their failure, so far, to take even the first steps towards the implementation of their professed socialist principles?

IS IT PRACTICAL?

An older generation of socialists would reply that socialism is impractical in countries which have not passed through the fire of capitalist development; that semi-feudal and pre-feudal societies afford neither the productive nor the social base for so huge a leap forward.

Modern theorists would deny that so dogmatic an assertion has any validity, in an historical era when a third of mankind has already adopted the socialist way of life and is willing and able to offer powerful assistance in overcoming the consequences of colonial backwardness. While conceding that the emerging colonies have special problems, and that transitional forms are necessary, they would claim that peaceful transitions and swift and purposeful progress in a socialist direction can be made — provided certain conditions are present.

But such conditions imply far more than a formal acceptance of socialist principles by individual leaders of organisations which themselves are not of a socialist nature. They imply the replacement of the imperialist governing and administrative apparatus not by a new bureaucracy which, though preserving the outward appearance of democracy, leaves effective control in the hands of local vested interests; but by a popular democracy, both local and national, which places power firmly in the hands of the common people, particularly those who, employed for wages or salaries, have no special axe to grind.

MASS PARTICIPATION

Leadership in such a transition would have to be exercised by a political organisation which, not merely in its upper levels but throughout its membership, is trained in and dedicated to scientific principles; is alive to and vigilant against the inevitable attempts of socially unprogressive classes to retard or set back development; is ceaselessly active to overcome the inertia and survivals of outworn habits and methods of thinking, and to arouse the enthusiasm and understanding of the masses without whose conscious participation so radical a transformation could never be carried through to success.

Precisely this conception seems to be lacking in the approach of Kwame Nkrumah, brilliant and talented a leader though he has proved himself to be. Recently, we learnt to our surprise and disappointment that his Government still retains the ban on scientific socialist literature, imposed by the former British authorities. His reason (*New Age*, May 16, 1957) is that

“Marxism, properly understood, is a guide to action, but people here are often confused by it.”

From the socialist point of view this lack of confidence in the common people — strangely reminiscent of the Church of the Middle Ages who would not let the people have the scriptures, but only the priests' interpretation of them — is incompatible with the spirit of collective discussion, leadership and mass participation in politics which is necessary for the great effort of transforming society.

It is true that Ghana, like other countries, must as Kwame Nkrumah says find her own road to socialism. But that road will be the accomplishment of the people themselves, not that of some superior being who aspires to do their thinking for them.

Men like Nehru and Nkrumah, however excellent their intentions, will find their aspirations for socialism hampered and frustrated by the fact the organisations which they lead are not informed and inspired by a common outlook and philosophy; that they become in fact prisoners of the conservative forces and classes which, in the absence of such an outlook, are bound to prevail.

PROFOUNDLY SIGNIFICANT

Yet it is a profoundly significant sign of our times that in practically every colonial country, it is the socialist leaders — whether brilliant individuals like Nehru and Nkrumah, or entire new-type organisations built on socialist foundations from the start — who have come to the fore.

The truth of the matter is that the age of nationalism, which was intimately bound up with the rise of capitalism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, is over. Nationalism, which was a liberating and fruitful fount of democratic and progressive thought in its day has turned into reactionary imperialism and vicious racialism.

The patriotic liberationist nationalism of oppressed peoples has many of the splendid features of the early democratic upsurge of the past uprising against feudalism in Europe two centuries ago. But life is teaching us that, faced with the vicious enemy of imperialism, simple nationalism is no longer enough.

We live in the era of Socialism, the era of the common man. And the future belongs to those leaders and movements who are bold and flexible enough to grasp that central truth of our times.

THE REICHSTAG FIRE

by L. BERNSTEIN

This is the third and last part of this series of articles on a critical episode of modern times. The first two parts appeared in previous issues of LIBERATION.

Dimitrov, van der Lubbe, Goering. These are the characters, the main characters of the Reichstag fire trial. Goering the Nazi Minister; van der Lubbe, the scapegoat hireling; Dimitrov, the Communist revolutionary. Of the others there is little to say. They were accused, and they were defended.

Dimitrov did not defend himself; he attacked. Repeatedly, until the very end of the trial he demanded his right to bring counsel from abroad to appear on his behalf. To the end, his demands were refused by the court. In his last summing up to the court, he applied again, and failed again.

"I have no personal mistrust of Dr. Teicher" said Dimitrov of the German lawyer who assisted him in the preparation of his defence, "but in the present conditions in Germany I cannot have the necessary confidence in his official defence. For this reason I am attempting to defend myself . . . I do not wish to offend my party comrade Torgler, particularly as, in my opinion, his defending counsel has already offended him enough, but as far as I am concerned, I would sooner be sentenced to death by this court though innocent, than be acquitted by the sort of defence put forward by Dr. Sack (for Torgler.)"

This statement is more than just the measure of the man; it is the spirit in which his defence was conducted. And it was the defence he conducted for himself that set Dimitrov apart from the other accused, and turned the Reichstag Fire Trial forever into 'Dimitrov's Case.'

It is not the intention of this article to describe the course of the case. Aided by Dimitrov, lawyers for Torgler, Tanev and Popov stripped the veil of lies from the state case, revealing the fabricated evidence, the perjured evidence, the blatant lies on which the state prosecution relied. But Dimitrov went further; there, in the heart of Hitler Germany, in the Nazi courtroom where his life was at stake, Dimitrov exposed the nature of German fascism and defended the cause to which he had given his life.

Let the words of his last speech to the court speak for themselves.

"I am no lawyer appearing before this court in the way of his profession. I am defending myself, an accused Communist; I am defending my political honour, my honour as a revolution-

ary; I am defending my Communist ideology, my ideals, the content and significance of my whole life.

“ . . . I have often been reproached that I do not take the highest court in Germany seriously. That is absolutely unjustified. It is true that the highest law for me is the programme of the Communist International; that the highest court for me is the Control Commission of the Communist International. But to me as an accused man the Supreme Court of the Reich is something to be considered in all seriousness . . . I can say with an easy conscience that everything which I have stated to this court and everything which I have spoken to the public is the truth.

* * *

“ . . . I have not only been roundly abused by the press . . . but my people have also, through me, been characterised as savage and barbarous. I have been called a suspicious character from the Balkans, and a wild Bulgarian. I cannot allow such things to pass in silence. It is true that Bulgarian fascism is savage and barbarous. But the working class, the peasants and the culture of Bulgaria are neither savage nor barbarous . . . A people which lived for five hundred years under a foreign yoke without losing its language and its national character, a people of workers and peasants who have fought and are fighting Bulgarian fascism — such a people is not savage and barbarous. Only fascism in Bulgaria is savage and barbarous. But I ask you, in what country does not fascism bear these qualities . . . ?

* * *

“ . . . The direction of this trial has been determined by the theory that the burning of the Reichstag was an act of the German Communist Party, of the Communist International . . . to be a signal for an armed Communist insurrection, a beacon for the overthrow of the present German Constitution. . . . This hypothesis shows that the enemies of Communism do not know much about Communism. . . . In February 1933 the Communist Party was faced with the threat of suppression, the Communist press had been prohibited and the destruction of the Party as a legal organisation was momentarily expected. These things the Communist Party knew well . . . The German Communist Party was well aware of the fact that although the Communist Parties of many other lands were illegal, they nevertheless continued to exist and carry on their activities . . . Anyone with a critical faculty can appreciate the importance of this phenomenon. Given the necessary situation the German Communist Party can still carry out a successful revolution. The experience of the Russian Communist Party proves this. Despite its illegality and the violence of the persecution to which it was subjected, that Party won over the working class in the end and came to power at its head.

The leaders of the German Communist Party could not possibly think that with the suppression of their Party all would be lost; that at any given moment the question was now or never; that the alternative was insurrection or extirpation. The leaders of the German Communist Party could not have entertained such foolish thoughts. Naturally they knew perfectly well that illegality would mean tremendous losses, that it would mean self-sacrifice and heroism; but they also knew that the revolutionary strength of the Party would grow again, and that one day it would be able to accomplish its final tasks successfully. For these reasons the possibility of the Communist Party seeking to indulge in any hazards at any moment must be rigorously excluded. The Communists fortunately are not so near-sighted as their opponents; neither do they lose their heads in difficult situations.

* * *

“. . . The Communist International . . . is a world Party, not a mere organisation of conspirators. Such a world Party does not play with insurrection and revolution. Such a Party cannot officially say one thing to its millions of adherents and at the same time in secret do exactly the opposite . . . Such a Party proceeds with all seriousness and with a full awareness of its responsibility when it approaches the millions of the proletariat and when it adopts its decisions concerning tactics and immediate tasks. It does not go in for double book-keeping . . . Mass work, mass activity, mass opposition and the united front — no adventurism — these are the elements of Communist tactics.

* * *

“Van der Lubbe has by no means told the truth in this court and he remains persistently silent . . . Whilst this fool van der Lubbe was carrying out his clumsy attempts at arson in the corridors and cloak-rooms, were not other unknown persons preparing the conflagration in the Sessions Chamber?” (At this moment, van der Lubbe began to laugh silently, his whole frame shaken with spasms of laughter).

“The unknown accomplices made all the preparations for the conflagration and then disappeared, without a trace. Now this stupid fool, this miserable Faust is here in the dock, while Mephistopheles has disappeared . . . What is van der Lubbe? A Communist? Inconceivable! An Anarchist? No! He is a declassed worker, a rebellious member of the scum of society. He is a misused creature who has been played off against the working class. No Communist, no anarchist anywhere in the world would conduct himself in court as van der Lubbe has done . . . If a Communist had done anything of this sort he would not remain silent knowing that four innocent men stood in the dock along-

side him. Van der Lubbe is no Communist. He is no anarchist. He is the misused tool of fascism.”

* * *

“ . . . The Public Prosecutor has proposed that the Bulgarian accused should be acquitted for lack of proof. I dissent from that proposal. It is not enough; it would not completely clear us from suspicion. The truth is that this trial has proved conclusively that we had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the fire, and that there is not the slightest ground to entertain further suspicions against us. We Bulgarians, and Torgler too, must all be acquitted, not for lack of proof, but because we, as Communists, neither have nor could have anything to do with an anti-Communist deed. . . . The elucidation of the Reichstag fire and the identification of the real incendiaries is a task which will fall to the people’s Court of the future proletarian dictatorship.

“When Galileo was condemned he declared: ‘E pur si muove!’ (‘And yet it moves.’) No less determined than old Galileo was Communists declare today: ‘E pur si muove!’ The wheel of history moves on towards the ultimate, inevitable, irrepressible goal of Communism . . .”

At this point, the judge ordered Dimitrov to be removed from the court. In his absence, a verdict of ‘Not Guilty’ was brought in against the four Communists. Two months later, Dimitrov was taken from his prison cell, and removed under escort to the Soviet Union.

And there in January, 1934, on his arrival in Moscow, he set the seal of the Reichstag fire.

“The trial” he told the thousands gathered to greet him “was a provocation, just as the burning of the Reichstag was a provocation. The trial was intended to conceal the incendiaries. The object was to shift the blame on to other people. But in accordance with the laws of dialectic, the laws of the class struggle of the proletariat, the trial turned into its opposite. The anti-Communist trial was transformed into a magnificent anti-fascist demonstration and a shameful fiasco for fascism A year has passed, and although Fascist Germany — one single prison — is isolated from the whole world, there is no one today in German who believes that the Communists set fire to the Reichstag. Even among the simple rank and file of the National Socialist Party there are many who are convinced that the Reichstag fire was the work of the fascist leaders.”

Georgi Dimitrov lived to become the first Prime Minister of the Bulgarian People’s Republic. He died in 1950, amidst the love and esteem of his fellow-men. His accusers, Hitler, Goering and their gang, perished miserably, despised and hated by humanity, convicted by the world of horrible crimes beyond number. For the flames that the Nazis had started in 1933 at the Reichstag spread to the furnaces at Auschwitz and Maidanek, where humans were roasted; to the streets of London and Stalingrad, Warsaw and Coventry. They were only extinguished when Berlin and all Germany were cauterised by fire and cannon.

Even today a spark of the evil and destructive fire kindled by the Nazis still smoulders and splutters in some other far-away corner of the world.

SUBSCRIBE TO "LIBERATION"

"LIBERATION" is published ten times a year. Send ten shillings for one year, or five shillings for six months to:

"LIBERATION",
P.O. Box 10120,
JOHANNESBURG

Fill in this form:

Name

Address

.....

To LIBERATION: Please send me "LIBERATION" for one year/six months, I enclose 10 shillings/five shillings (cross out that which does not apply).