

Book Reviews

Socialism, Education and Development, Fay Chung and Emmanuel Ngara, Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1985 (Z\$6,50 plus sales tax)

This book is divided into two sections: the first on various aspects of socialism in general; the second as applied to education and development. Throughout, the authors have Africa and especially Zimbabwe very much in mind. It does not go into many questions in depth, but raises a vast number of very important issues for developing countries.

Some pains are taken to allay the anxieties of those who fear the wholesale nationalisation of all institutions, or the blind application of socialist principles, or the confiscation of land, houses, wives, husbands and even chickens. Socialism does not mean state control, or excessive bureaucratic control or totalitarianism, but the scientific analysis of objective social reality.

At the same time the authors point out the failures of African Socialism in Tanzania. In Libya, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan what is called socialism is in reality feudalistic, reactionary and oppressive, while other leaders are racist in their appeal to tribal instincts. Zimbabwe is fortunate in coming to independence late through an armed struggle, so that her leaders have seen the problems of other countries and have evolved beyond an ideology of mere nationalism.

The detrimental effects of colonialism are pointed out, particularly lingering mental colonisation. Under neo-colonialism Western nations can overthrow governments, but unfortunately the authors do not have the courage also to criticise Soviet Union interference in less powerful states. There is a good analysis of the activities of multinationals, trade between developing and developed nations, the International Monetary Fund and NGOs. However I am not convinced that tourism is a major cause of the prostitution problem except in Swaziland and Bophuthatswana. It is essential that developing countries co-ordinate themselves into a stronger body to control these neocolonialist activities. But it is noted that it is unwise to ignore reality for the sake of ideological purity; there is a need to make alliances; for example, are there sufficient local management skills and investment available for nationalisation? Surprisingly no reference is made to the way multinationals make friends even in socialist governments by means of gifts and donations. With the

present question of sanctions against South Africa it is interesting to read that Zimbabwe benefitted from the days of economic sanctions in that it developed local self-sufficiency and limited the growth of multinational power.

The opening chapter is a very well presented brief account of socialism. The important distinction is made between scientific socialism and utopian socialism. Zimbabwe has very clearly chosen scientific socialism. Chapter two contains a class analysis of Zimbabwe. The authors are aware of the claim that Marxist class analysis is not applicable to Africa, but this claim is dismissed in a single, short paragraph. However, with so many exceptions to classical Marxist class analysis having to be made, some more thought might be given to finding a more appropriate class analysis for Africa.

The idea of Socialist education is outlined, based on Marx's idea of a *polytechnic education*. On purely development criteria the educational level of the majority must be raised to provide high quality education for a large majority at a reasonable price, which means fee-paying day schools. This book rejects rote learning. The need is to learn to control and change the natural environment and society. But although students are to be taught to think critically one wonders how critically they are to think about socialism or the government?

The advance of science and technology is especially important for Africa in changing from superstitious and fatalistic attitudes. This along with the arts and research are all to be related to the social reality of the nation, serve the needs of the nation and not be estranged from the mass of the people. Interestingly theology is mentioned but there is no reference to theological research leading to an African liberation theology. The authors propose academic freedom, freedom of expression and constructive criticism, but with ideological guidance provided from the Party: a very fragile balance which begs a lot of questions. All students must have a sound grasp of Marxism-Leninism, but what if they find they prefer capitalism?

While the educational system in Korea is impressive in many ways, some readers may feel nervous at the thought of Africa also following the personality cult of the Dear Leader Kim Jong II. And particularly surprising are the examples of the pyramids of Egypt and grand buildings of Ancient Rome and modern New York to illustrate the dignity of labour, unless we are to re-institute slavery or change our minds about the multinationals.

There is a brief chapter on education with production which started in the Zimbabwean refugee camps during the liberation war. This chapter could have

been expanded to give a fuller account since the Zimbabwean experience which has been relatively successful would be of interest to many outside the country.

There is a very good review of what elements make up the culture of a nation, including the negative effects of colonialisation on the culture of Zimbabwe, and a critical analysis of some of the negative aspects of traditional Zimbabwean culture. This is followed by a call to develop a new culture, taking suitable elements from Western culture as well as from indigenous African culture.

On development; it is the people who develop. So it does not mean the construction of prestige projects, but the elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance, for which the increase in national wealth is essential. We are not to confuse the welfare state with socialism; socialism does not necessarily mean free education and health services. There must be a planned economy, but planned with the participation of all those who will be taking part in the programme and all those who will be affected by the programme, to be achieved through *democratic centralism*. Parents committees are praised for raising funds for building, but how much say are these parents to have in the education of their children?

This short, well written book would be very useful as a basis for group discussions, for teaching, as well as an introduction for anyone involved in education or development in third world countries.

Reviewed by Nigel Johnson, St Pauls Mission, Harare.

How do you Spell Development? A Study of a Literacy Campaign in Ethiopia, Margareta and Rolf Sjöström, Scandanavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1983, 196 pages, price not quoted.

If you can spell the term 'development' it implies that you are literate and if you are literate then it implies that you are capable of contributing meaningfully to the development process. This apparently sums up the 'silent' hypothesis held by the two researchers Margareta and Rolf Sjöström when they set out on the study which culminated in the present book. One might also add that this statement also appears to be a fair reflection of the view that has prevailed in Ethiopian society where it has been more or less taken for granted that literacy is a necessary prerequisite for the development of the rural areas of the country. People needed literacy skills, it was agreed, in order to comprehend information about agricultural techniques, health, etc.