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THE year 1958 has been marked in Africa by an upsurge of African political activity which most observers have assumed has been stimulated by events in Ghana.

It is well known among collectors of African folk musics that most public and private social affairs find their way into the continually evolving songs of each tribe and territory. It is, perhaps, significant to note that there has been little or no mention from any quarters other than West Africa of the use of political songs composed by the folk either in town or country.

In recent recording tours undertaken by members of the African Music Society in six different territories of Southern Africa, two or three songs only out of a total of over a thousand recorded had any slight mention of the kind of political activity which the newspapers and others like to feature as being representative of the attitude of the whole community of African peoples.

The evidence of song clearly refutes the popularly held impression that all Africans are seething with political agitation and unrest. Those articulate African composers who sing for, if not speak for, their various communities are clearly more pre-occupied with local social realities than with hypothetical political questions which are the urgent concern of a small but vocal section of the African public who may, however, be able to coerce the simple-minded into supporting their cause with local acts of enjoyable irresponsibility.

A true cross-section of the songs of Africa still reveals the heart of the people rather than the columns of the daily papers to which sensation rather than sense, romanticism rather than romance, and revolt rather than responsibility is saleable 'news'. The great body of solid social common sense and activity as revealed in their songs is, perhaps, more truly representative of the outlook of the mass of Africans than the fulminations of politicians seeking swift self-advancement.

It would be most interesting and instructive if members of the Society were to make special note of this aspect of African folk music activities in the coming year.

THE EDITOR.