

**7/1/1964**

# **MORALITY PLAY FOR POLITICIANS AND OTHERS**

**Play: THE DICTATOR'S SLIPPERS.**

**Theatre: Opera House.**

**Directed by Norah Caulfield for the M.R.A.**

The Moral Re - Armament movement's political morality plays are now world famous, not so much for their merit as drama as for their simple ideological message and the spectacular vigour with which they are produced and promoted.

It is some years since Port Elizabeth was visited by an M.R.A. play "team." The special interest of this one is that the cast, with one exception, is non-White. Before the curtain goes up the all-White audience is addressed by a former member of the now banned African National Congress, Mr P. Q. Vundla, of Johannesburg.

At the opening last night he spoke of his own experience in South African politics and of his new approach to it since adopting the M.R.A. ideology.

## **Ambitious**

Peter Howard, the British M.R.A. leader who is the movement's leading dramatist, built "The Dictator's Slippers" on a situation reminiscent of that in Russia when Stalin died. The dictator's lieutenants all aspire to step into his shoes. We meet them in the awesome office of the Police Chief, where all the action of the play takes place.

A former confidant of the dictator is summoned from "protective custody" to reveal what he knows. It is what the prisoner tells the aspirant dictators after a surprising revelation by the dictator's physician that persuades them to adopt the only course for saving the best in their revolutionary ideals — and themselves.

In a production of this kind the sincerity of the players can offset many of their shortcomings as actors, and this company did very well indeed last night; only in voice projection did some of them fail noticeably.

## **Like Krushev**

Palmer Kote made the most favourable impression in his role as the prisoner, but Benjamin Phatshwana was also outstanding as the cosmopolitan character, Polyglot.

Ronald Hogg, the only White in the cast, played the British revolutionary with the evocative name of Bullbluff. A certain piquancy was introduced by Mr Hogg's remarkable resemblance to Mr Nikita Krushev.

The other characters with appropriate names (and dress) were Destani the Indian (Leslie Mannie), Irasca from Africa (Jerry Ngwane), Dr Hippocrat (Thomas Nkwana) and the police chief, Saturn, played by Maxwell Ntombella, who made a graceful little speech at the final curtain.

This play should be a stimulating experience for those White South Africans who know Africans only as employees or a political "menace."—C.S.M.