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# **LIBERATION**

ONE SHILLING

6 NOVEMBER, 1956

**GUIANA: THE FACTS**

A. M. KATHRADA

**"CONSTITUTIONAL"  
FALLACY**

RUTH FIRST



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

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## "A CRYING NEED"

"There is a crying need for a magazine of this type," writes a reader in England to *Liberation*. His statement is confirmed by letters like that from Mr. Mdzeke of East London, who writes: "Because I am a man who is anxious about our people's liberty I want to learn more about politics, and I found your *Liberation* to be the magazine teaching me what to do."

From the clash of ideas in open debate, we believe, comes truth and clarity. In this issue Ruth First and Alan Doyle carry forward the controversies about Liberalism and about the language question which our magazine initiated; and Mr. Mandela casts a bright light on certain trends in non-European political life. We think readers will find Mr. Kathrada's well-informed comments on events in British Guiana both illuminating and useful.

In the next issue we intend to publish a further article on the language question.

We very much appreciate comments from our readers, whether or not they are favourable. "Too exclusively political; what about more literary and cultural interest?" is one criticism we have met. We agree; *Liberation* is anxious to serve as a means of expression, particularly for non-white writers who are seeking such a medium. But to serve that function we must get short stories and poems from authors who so far have not come forward. We appeal to them to do so.

We appeal also to our well-wishers to come forward with donations to our printing fund. We too have a "crying need" for no people's periodical of our character can hope to go forward without financial assistance from its supporters. We have ambitious plans for 1954: a bigger magazine, illustrated and printed on better paper. But all those plans are dependent on your support.

### LIBERATION PRINTING FUND

This month, the *Liberation Printing Fund* is able to announce a better total -- £14. 10s. -- mainly due to the efforts of our newly-formed Finance Committee, which organised a successful social evening; the first we hope of a regular series of fund-raising efforts.

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# LIBERATION

*A Journal of Democratic Discussion*

No. 6

November 1953

One Shilling

## THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

*"Let it vast assembly be,  
And with a great solemnity,  
Declare with measured words,  
that ye  
Are, as God has made ye,  
free!"*

SHELLEY.

**G**RANTED a new lease of life by the grotesque travesty of democratic institutions which serves this country as a Constitution, the Nationalist Government has celebrated its re-election with a new series of rude assaults on the people of South Africa.

We have no cause to be surprised that Schoeman should seek to suppress African trade unions, Verwoerd to suppress education for Africans, Swart to suppress the outspoken leaders of the people's opposition. What is surprising, and deeply disturbing, is the failure of the nine-tenths of the population which is anti-Nationalist and anti-Fascist to rally and unite its forces in the face of the present headlong Malanite drive towards the Servile State.

### Inside the U.P.

When he addressed the United Party provincial conference at Port Elizabeth last month, Mr. Strauss attacked the "rebel" M.P.'s, who had carried the process of toadying to and appeasing the Government — which he himself had initiated — past the limits of decency and party discipline. He attacked the "powerful influences in financial quarters" who stood behind these semi-Nationalists in his Party. He belatedly advised his followers: "go back to principles and don't play at politics." And he delivered himself of these memorable words:

*"Never in the record of human history has any nation prospered permanently at the expense of another, no matter of what colour."*

We wish that Mr. Strauss himself and his colleagues could be made to study those words and ponder their deeper import. Let him apply them to the conduct of Mr. G. B. Gordon and the United Party majority on the Johannesburg City Council, plotting with the Government behind closed doors to implement the inhuman Western Areas scheme. Or the dirty deal that is being conducted to sell the Coloured vote.

The United Party has played a despicable role under the Nationalist Government, deserting its post as Opposition and crossing the floor of Parliament to vote for a Malan-Swart dictatorship. For that betrayal it is now paying with its own disintegration and collapse.

It is not only the United Party which has been caught in a crisis of leadership by the march of events.

### **Trade Union Failure**

Consider the case of the registered trade unions.

The Nationalist Government has not hesitated to lay impious hands on these seemingly stable and invulnerable bodies. To the delight, on the one hand of their powerful capitalist backers; on the other, of the ambitious Nationalist cells in the trade unions, Ministers Swart and Schoeman have not hesitated to issue Suppression of Communism Act orders to over thirty trade union leaders, forcing them to quit organisations which most of them have laboured a lifetime to build. The victims include not only the secretaries of small and struggling unions but also pillars of the Trades and Labour Council like Messrs. Huyser and Sachs, who have long repented the early revolutionary ardours which may have afforded the Liquidator a technical excuse for including them on his List.

The illusions of class peace fostered by the I.C. Act have thus been rudely shattered. Even outside observers like Mr. Ivan Walker, former Secretary of Labour in the Smuts Government, and the Bishop of Johannesburg can clearly see and have openly stated that the entire structure of free trade unionism in South Africa is in mortal peril.

On the whole, the leaders of the trade union movement have failed signally to measure up to the imperative needs of this situation, involving as it does the survival of their organisations which took so much effort and sacrifice to build. There have been formal protests, deputations to the Minister of Labour, petitions. In one or two cases, outraged workers have downed tools in protest strikes for a day. But, on the whole there is a complete absence of a sense of immediate emergency; of any real determination to enlist the rank and file of organised labour in South Africa for mass action of the only kind which could halt the Government. There is no move to summon a wide, powerful alliance of political, religious, ex-service-men's and other organisations to join forces in determined defence of the traditional rights and liberties of the people. Above all,



even at this desperate hour, the trade union leaders maintain the fiction that South African politics is the white man's business; exclude African unions from "all-in" conferences on matters which vitally affect them, and hold studiously aloof from the main bastions of South African democracy: the national liberation organisations of the African, Indian and Coloured people.

The truth is that the leaders of the registered trade unions have lost the militant crusading spirit which marked their early years, which led men to face deportation, imprisonment and even death for the cause of organising their fellow-workers. They have turned reformist and bureaucratic, functioning under the Industrial Conciliation Act as an adjunct of the Labour Department, and confining their attention to the phraseology and administration of legal agreements. The I.C. Act, itself a disgraceful and immoral bargain with the employers at the expense of the African workers, has been the instrument of corruption and degeneration of the former fighting associations of the working class into tame benefit societies and complaints offices, along the lines of the much admired bureaucracies of the British T.U.C. The vision and the urgency which fired the pioneers of the trade union movement has been forgotten.

Unless that vision and urgency can be recaptured, and a return be made to the fundamental trade union principle of class, not racial, organisation, the future of the white trade union movement is grim indeed.

## **The African Unions**

And what of the African trade unions?

It is a tragedy for the African trade unions that they have attempted to follow the lines of the established trade unions of European workers in this country. We have seen the dead end into which this type of bureaucratic, reformist organisation has led the Europeans. For colonial-type workers, such as the non-whites of South Africa, such an approach offers no prospects whatever. After thirty years of conscientious training of potential organisers as passable book-keepers, filing clerks and students of industrial legislation the African trade union movement has not been able to achieve a level where it could offer a serious challenge to Schoeman's legislation. The place of a trade union organiser is not in the office, but in the factory — preferably as a worker in that factory. Instead of passing resolutions "demanding" recognition from the Government, the job of the unions is to compel recognition from the employers. The task of building African unions which are real living associations of the workers, not "complaints offices," and which understand the inseparable connection between national oppression and the poverty of the workers, is one of decisive importance to the

whole future of the national liberation movement. Mr. Schoeman's "bleed the unions" Act cannot prevent that task being accomplished. The only thing that can prevent it is the lack of understanding on the part of the workers and their leaders of what is required. Recent signs among African trade unionists indicate that former misunderstandings are fast being dispelled.

## **The Role of Congress**

A powerful factor accelerating the development of African trade unions, would be the organised and enthusiastic assistance of the African National Congress.

Before Congress, however, can give proper attention to this and other matters of urgency, it must set its own house in order. Although it has clearly shown itself, over the past years of Nationalist misrule, to be the most advanced democratic force in the country, the national liberation movement is not immune from the stresses that have rocked every opposition movement in the country.

Congress is not a homogeneous body; it does not consist of a single social class, and it is not united by any specific philosophy, beyond the broad conceptions of freedom from oppression. It is right and proper that this should be so; indeed one of the main faults of the proposed new draft Constitution which has emanated from certain circles for discussion at the forthcoming national conference, is precisely that it endeavours to replace the wide, all-embracing character of Congress, open to all patriotic Africans with a narrow, rigid and sectarian outlook.

There is room within the Congress for men and women from every walk of life, and of every shade of democratic opinion; that is its strength. But there is no room for spies and deserters, and there is no room for deliberate disrupters and political gangsters. And when one hears of cliques within the Congress who organise assaults on fellow-Congressmen, or who set up secret societies to capture leading positions through deliberate campaigns of lies and slanders, or who mischievously set one Province against another and the African against the Indian Congress — then we must say it is time for Congress to conduct a searching investigation into such reports and, if they are true, to expel those responsible from its ranks. For if they are left to carry on, men like these will end by destroying the Congress, the principal hope and mainstay of democratic South Africa.

We have not hesitated in this Editorial to speak our mind frankly and bluntly, although we know some people will not like us any the better for it. We do not think the cause of emancipation will be served by verbal diplomacy and smoothing over differences.



## **A Brighter Side**

At the same time, we should not like to give the impression that all is dark and gloomy on the South African scene. On the contrary, the very factors of oppression and danger which panicked the careerists into toenadering and disruption, have encouraged "the fearless and the free" into more resolute resistance. An event of first-rate political importance was the emergence during October of the South African Congress of Democrats, a body established at the instance of the African and Indian Congresses to unite those sections of the population which they themselves do not cater for, and draw them in as partners in the common struggle. The significance of this organisation is not in its numbers — for at this stage it has not many — but in the fact that it kills the idea that the issue in South Africa is a racial one of white versus non-white. It is nothing of the sort; and the addition of an organised body of white persons who stand four-square with the liberation movements for equal rights and opportunities to all, will serve to underline the truth: that this issue is one of principle. The new body has no set of principles of its own separate and distinct from those of the Congresses: it seeks to complement and not to compete with them; and a minority suggestion that it should do otherwise found little favour at the Conference. It may sound very daring and "progressive" to propose that such a body should work "among all sections of the population," and then to accuse the majority of "wanting a colour bar" when they insist on the body serving its stated purpose and functions. Of course, the new Congress has no "colour bar," and like the draft Congress constitution referred to above, which is also full of "daring" "Left" phrases, the minority proposals merely create confusion where none existed before.

## **People's Assembly**

One of the reasons for the ability of the factionalists in the A.N.C. to carry on with their activities is the lull which has taken place since the closing of the first phase of the campaign last December. True, members were given a vitally necessary organisational plan to work on, but organisation is only really possible around a central political theme and objective. It was the absence of such clearly-defined and widely understood objectives which gave the mischief-makers their opportunity to fish in troubled waters.

As the annual national conference approaches, the time to formulate and agree upon a central plan and specific objective becomes pressing. We cannot abstain from expressing a warm welcome for the proposal made in the presidential address to the Cape provincial A.N.C. conference, that the Congresses should take the initiative in convoking a great Assembly of the People,

*"From every hut village and town,  
Where those who live and suffer, moan  
For others' misery and their own."*

The United Nations Commission on race discrimination has called upon the peoples of this country to get together and resolve their differences. They will call in vain on the Malan Government to do any such thing; if they did convene such a conference we might expect the non-whites perhaps to be represented by the "Bantu National Congress" and the "Kleurling Volksbond," seated of course in a separate hall— or two halls — and notified in due course what the baases had decided! Nor can we expect any fruitful results from the proposed conference of the Institute of Race Relations, heavily weighted as it would be bound to be in favour of the dominant minority.

But what the Government will not and the Institute cannot do, the Congresses can and should do, in company with the Trade Unions, the Liberal and Labour Parties, and every other major body that is prepared to join with them. It could be a wonderful venture, mobilising and inspiring the whole of the democratic forces of our country, uplifting and educating vast masses of the people.

*'Let a great assembly be  
Of the fearless and the free....'*

(The verses in this article are quoted from Shelley's "The Masque of Anarchy," published in 1832)

## **BRITISH GUIANA -- A PRELUDE TO MASSACRE**

**By A. M. KATHRADA**

Speaking at the Conservative Party Conference at Margate recently the British Colonial Secretary, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, said that their "thoughts must be with those men and women of every race under the Crown who were living in the two territories where law and order was menaced by wicked men...."

He was referring of course to the events in Malaya, Kenya and now in British Guiana. And while these words were uttered at Margate, more than 600 British troops (500 men of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and 120 from Jamaica) landed on the soil of British Guiana. Many more had already sailed.

He was thinking of Booker Bros., McConnel and Co. Ltd. and of Demerara & Co. Ltd. — the sugar barons — who were faced with the militant demands of their under-fed, under-paid workers for improved conditions and for the recognition of their trade union



rights. So much is this influence that "King Sugar" wields on every aspect of life there that "B.G." is often referred to as "Booker's Guiana."

It has a budget of about £5,000,000 (five million) and its annual exports and imports amount to £11,000,000 (eleven million) each. To get an idea of the importance of sugar in this economy we take a report of the 52nd Annual Meeting of Booker Bros. and McConnell & Co. as published in the London Times on July 16th, 1952. Consolidated accounts for the group for the year ending December 31st, 1951 show a combined net profit of £660,677, after deducting tax (£686,443) and minority interests (£16,628) and after setting aside replacement reserves, £505,642). If we add up the amounts set aside for taxation, reserves etc. to profit we get a total figure of £2,237,904.

### **"King Sugar"**

The sugar interests have always had their representatives in the highest governing councils of the country.

Aside from direct representation in the Legislative Council the sugar interests have their representatives in strategic positions in various statutory Boards and Committees; e.g. the Drainage Board, Central Board of Health, Transport and Harbours etc.; the Govt. Marketing Committee which fixes the minimum guaranteed prices for farmers produce; the Chamber of Commerce; the Rice Marketing Board which determines for how much and to whom exports are to be sold.

The sugar imperialists control 170,000 acres of the best land in the country. And in order to ensure a constant supply of labour their representatives in the Government and other industries have consistently fought against and succeeded in preventing a minimum wage law, so that the labourers are not veered away by more attractive wages outside the sugar estates.

—While the average wage is not much higher, some workers on the sugar estates earn as little as 60 cents to one dollar a week.

—The average farmer has about  $3\frac{1}{4}$  acres of land, generally badly drained and irrigated. Experts maintain that at least 15 to 20 acres of well drained and irrigated land is necessary for a decent livelihood.

—In 1948 the Government appointed Nutrition Committee reported:—

"As a result of sampling surveys in widely scattered areas in the colony, we can affirm that at least 25% of the school-children are necessitous."

### **The New Constitution**

In 1950 the British Government appointed a Commission to formulate a new Constitution for British Guiana and in April of 1953 the first elections under this Constitution were held.

71 per cent. of the people voted and 51 per cent. of these voted for the People's Progressive Party, led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan. (Star, 14-10-53) There are 208,000 eligible voters.

The Constitution provides for a State Council to which six members are nominated by the Governor and three are appointed on the recommendations of the Assembly.

The Assembly has 24 elected members and 3 official members appointed by the Governor.

The Executive Council consists of the Governor and 10 members.

The Governor appoints the Speaker of the House.

The Governor has the power to veto the decisions of the Government.

The present crisis came about amidst circumstances which proved beyond all doubt, if such proof was necessary, the complete disregard of the British imperialists for the expressed wishes and desires of the colonial people. Indeed the arbitrary action in British Guiana is perhaps unprecedented in the long and bloody history of imperialism. Here you have a Government, elected under the guarded and restrictive provisions of the much-boasted so-called British Democracy. It has been elected into power by virtue of the feeling of the overwhelming masses of the people of that country, a fact that cannot be disputed even by Whitehall. And then, just because the Government, acting on a clear mandate of the people, takes certain decisions that are not popular with the moneyed men who control the country, the elected representatives of the people are unashamedly dismissed and the whole country is handed over to the unrestricted control of one individual, Sir Alfred Savage, Governor of British Guiana, in the appointment of whom the masses of the people of the Colony have had no say.

After all, colonial people have no right to think. And if they dare to think or decide in any way that is different to the policies of the rulers, then the "experiment" has failed and the colonial people are once again "backward illiterates" and "savages" etc.

That is the tragic story of British Guiana. It all started when the workers on the sugar estates went out on strike for 25 days demanding higher pay and the recognition of their trade union. Towards the end of this strike practically all the workers of B.G. came out on a 36-hour sympathy strike. And when the workers decided to return to work, the Government introduced a Bill to recognise their legitimate trade unions. But the Speaker of the House flagrantly overruled certain requests of the Minister of Labour in connection with the Bill. The Members of the P.P.P. thereupon walked out of the House and announced that they would boycott the House until the Speaker's decision was reversed. The people of British Guiana, under the banner of the P.P.P. immediately renewed their demands for Constitutional reforms and widespread campaigns were launched ... For the imperialists the crisis had begun.



## Violence and Slander

Troops are sent to British Guiana.

The British Government suspends the Constitution of Guiana.

A State of Emergency is declared and Governor Savage under the dictatorial powers vested in him dismisses the Ministers.

A series of provocations begin.

The Colonial Office in London issues a statement, devoid of facts, containing allegations, slanders and statements which are contradictory and cannot be substantiated.

The statement accused the "faction" of even attempting violence "to turn British Guiana into a Communist State."

But the truth is that even up to the time of writing (over two weeks after the troops had landed) there has been no outbreak of violence.

In a telephonic interview with Guiana's deputy Police Commissioner, Don Iddon reported on 7th October:—"Mr. Whittingham said, 'There are no demonstrations, there is no general strike; there is nothing abnormal happening here whatsoever.'"

The newspapers all reported that calm prevailed, even during the general strike. The Colony's deposed Prime Minister said:—"I don't know what all the excitement is about."

The Colonial Office Statement accused that the P.P.P. Ministers' sole object is to ~~seize~~ control of the whole life of the territory and run it on totalitarian lines .... "They have shown clearly that they are prepared to use violence and to plunge the State into economic and social chaos ...."

Now take an excerpt from the speech made by Dr. Jagan on 17th June, 1953 in reply to the Governor's address on the opening of the new House:—

"The House is fully conscious of the role which private capital is playing and will play in the development of British Guiana. We will take such steps as will encourage and attract private capital for the development of the country and above all will guarantee that the Govt. will honour and fulfill all its obligations and undertakings.

The accusation in the Colonial Offices statement is that the "Ministers attempted to gain their political ends in the trade unions by legislation ...." and "they (the Ministers) are seeking to turn the workers into the political tool of an extremist clique."

Let us read an extract from Dr. Jagan's speech to the Assembly on this subject:—

"The House notes Your Excellency's observations on the need for the development of a spirit of co-operation between capital and labour. The relation of capital and labour must not be based as hitherto on the whims of the capitalist but on the recognised rights of the workers to organise and bargain through the trade unions of their choice and to take an active part in the running of the industries in which they are engaged."

Such then is the tragic story of British Guiana; the flouting of the wishes of the people, the deposition of an elected Prime Minister, the attempts to subdue the progress of a people by armed might, the lies and baseless accusations, the silencing of truth to the outside world.

They are familiar, all. They were heard oft before and they point towards one sure direction, one sure end — a prelude to massacre.

Let honest people everywhere raise their protests as never before!

Let them call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops!

Withdraw the dictatorial powers from Savage and hand the country back to its elected rulers! Act now and prevent the massacre!

Don't let the words of Dr. Eric Williams be repeated again:—

*Strange that an article like sugar, so sweet and necessary to human existence should have occasioned such crimes and bloodshed."*

## THE "CONSTITUTIONAL" FALLACY

By RUTH FIRST

**P**ROFESSOR PRICE of the Liberal Party has done his party little good in his reply in the September issue of *Liberation* to Mr. Mandela's criticism of Liberal policy. It is not to be wondered at that some Liberals have hastened to assert that Mr. Price was not speaking officially for his party.

Perhaps his patronising, supercilious and condescending tone should be ignored — as his derisive allusions to Mr. Mandela as the Tramp walking down the road to the Big Rock Candy Mountains Utopia achieved after "one real good mass struggle." It's a nice little jingle but nothing damages Mr. Price's case more heavily than his treatment of the Non-European political struggles of today and the Defiance Campaign, and nothing shows more revealingly his abysmal ignorance of the aims and methods of the Non-European national movement.

Mr. Price lets his indignation at criticism of Liberal Party policy rather blur his logic and perception. In his article he answers



what he terms "flat accusations" that the "Liberals are only a species of subtle Nationalist" (Mr. Price's description, not that of Mr. Mandela, incidentally) by a "straight-forward denial." But Mr. Mandela's article if looked at calmly, made no such blunt accusations. The article advanced the argument that asking people to limit themselves to constitutional means of struggle "could only have a basis in reality for those people who enjoy democratic and constitutional rights." It meant in effect asking Non-Europeans to submit to laws enacted by an undemocratic, minority Parliament, among these laws the Public Safety, Criminal Law Amendment and Group Areas Acts. Mr. Price answers that the Liberal Party objects to these laws and has said publicly. He quotes from his party's economic and labour policy.

But this is no answer to the argument.

The Liberal Party may today provide some kind of satisfaction to European voters who have become too disillusioned with United Party betrayals of principle to tolerate remaining in that party and who hear from the Liberal Party happy-sounding phrases about upholding the essential dignity of every human being irrespective of race and colour. In a South African political set-up where since Union and before every European political party has claimed to stand for democracy and yet has striven to preserve a closed monopoly of democratic rights for Europeans only, the advent of the Liberal Party pledged to the winning of a true, universal democracy and determined to accept as allies all South Africans, European and Non-European, who share these aims, could have been a cheering sign of a break with the old colour-bar approach. An uncompromising, non-racialist policy for such a party was the first requisite. Equally necessary was the recognition that democracy in South Africa is in danger just because it has been denied the majority and that it can be saved only by the joint political action of both European and Non-European forces, using what parliamentary pressures remain to the democrat and mobilising the extra-parliamentary support of the people as well.

From the earliest days the Liberals, with their talk of using only constitutional means, sought political respectability and announced their intention of divorcing themselves from the mass movements of the Non-European people.

By doing so they closed their eyes even to the fact that the constitutional rights of the privileged White citizen are fast diminishing. Democratic rights are being undermined by the Nationalist Government acting quite constitutionally and within the framework of laws they inherited from previous governments or within the terms of those new laws they have placed on the statute book by their majority vote in Parliament. Apart from attempts, now abandoned in favour of more astute tactics, to take the Cape Coloured off the common voter's roll in defiance of

the two-third majority vote required by the entrenched clauses in the Constitution, the Nationalists have acted "democratically" and "constitutionally." They were returned at the polls by a minority of the European population too, but even the electoral system which made that possible cannot be challenged on constitutional grounds. A minority of representatives in Parliament today stand opposed to the creation of a Christian-National totalitarian state. So, according to the gentlemanly rules of political cricket, we must stand aside for the juggernaut of Nationalist legislation to ground our liberties against the Nationalists into. That would indeed be turning the political struggle against the Nationalists into a sport.

But to revert to the argument of Mr. Mandela which Mr. Price describes as a fine frenzy. Presuming even that Europeans who have the vote have the means to assert their political claims constitutionally, what of the Non-Europeans? They are unrepresented in the governing bodies of the country, except for a farcical system by which a handful of Europeans can register their protest at laws which bear heavily upon them. Because the constitution permits this undemocratic system, must Non-Europeans acquiesce in the operation of these laws? There comes a time when the burden of discriminatory laws becomes intolerable and among the Non-European people that time has been reached. To tell such a disfranchised people to campaign for redress only by constitutional means, when they have no such means, is to tell them to submit. This is Mr. Mandela's argument but it seems to escape Mr. Price.

It is possible to put another construction on Mr. Price's approach and that is to see it not as an advice to the Non-European people to submit to unjust laws, but to leave it to Europeans who have the vote to campaign constitutionally to win Non-European emancipation. Of all current Liberal illusions this is perhaps the deepest of all.

All who have read any history must surely recognise that Parliament or the existing constitutional authority is never the only, or the most important, fountainhead of political change, and that those who have political power in their hands are the watchdogs of the old order and not the group that advocates social change. Under the Nationalist policy of white-anting democracy South Africa's Parliament has not only become incapable of defending democracy, but South Africa's White electorate has been won over to the belief that they have an interest in entrenching the present system of inequality and race discrimination. All credit to the members of the Liberal Party who try to convince them this is not so. But the Liberals must not delude themselves that faced with a serious challenge to their political majority the Nationalists will not subvert the Constitution to remain in power. They are capable of disfranchising Opposition voters who exhibit un-South African views, and using the battery of dictatorial measures that they have equipped themselves with to ensure their ascendancy.



Above all, the Liberals must not delude themselves that the Non-Europeans can patiently await the results of painstaking and long-term Liberal education and reform of White public opinion. Oppression has become too painful for such never-ending patience. In any case to treat the Non-Europeans just as onlookers at the sidelines of a White political game while a small sympathetic group tries to encourage greater tolerance and understanding of their plight is to give them a completely passive role and is presumptuous, condescending and impudent.

Mr. Price might reply that he doesn't counsel against African political action, altogether, but only that there must be the certainty that a campaign "can be carried out peaceably." What species of political insurance agent is this Liberal who asks such a guarantee? Presumably he would have counselled against the Cromwell Uprising, the War of Independence in the North American Colonies, the Paris Commune, the 1926 General Strike in Britain, the resistance of the peoples of Europe to the invasion of their countries by Nazi armies — all because there was no guarantee that they could achieve their aims "peaceably."

This approach must delight the Minister of Justice. It accepts his version that any violence which has accompanied African political struggles has been caused by bloodthirsty agitators and not by his trigger-happy young policemen acting under shoot-first and talk-afterwards orders. On May 1 1951 and June 26 1952 Africans abstained peacefully from work in protest against laws they objected to. They were acting within the constitution. Police firing was ordered and innocent people shot down in their locations and townships. Mr. Price puts the blame for the deaths of these people not on the Nationalist Government but the leaders of the Non-European people.

Every demonstration of the Non-European people that has ended in some bloodshed has been as a result of vicious state action. In the 1946 African miners' strike is the guilt for the deaths of defenceless African miners that of their union asking for a living wage, or that of the mineowners and the state who connived at bloody suppression of his strike?

The present system in South Africa means useless tragedy for hundreds of thousands, never mind hundreds of Africans. Mr. Price countenances the continuance of this system because he wants to save some "bewildered worker from being cudgelled in a city square." And he has the temerity to suggest that it is African leaders and not the brutalities of the Nationalist Government and its police force who are erecting the "tombstones" of those killed in political struggle.

One can only conclude that he shares the terror of the Nationalists at Non-European political movements and feels they must at all costs be stayed off.

He advises against "storming of bastilles" (presumably a petition to the King of France would have been more constitutional?); against "barricade mounting" and "waving of tattered banners." He wants no "tombstones as milestones," but ceaseless constitutional action, argument and much organisation. He doesn't see that the largest tombstone of all is, under the Nationalists, being erected over the Constitution.

I doubt if anyone in the Non-European political movement believes that its aims will be achieved by "one real good mass struggle." The Non-European political movements do not scorn argument and organisation. They are daily engaged in these tasks. But there comes a time in the growth of every political movement when consistent organisation produces militant peoples' actions in defence of rights under attacks or for improvements in conditions. There is the time when patient representations to authority go unheard and argument has clearly failed. If workers are by law denied the right to strike that is presumably when Mr Price would counsel retreat rather than a strike. Or he would demand a guarantee that no striker be victimised and no picket clubbed by a policeman. And if an employer does sack a worker or Mr. Swart does order teargas or the use of a sten gun, this would be the fault of the trade union.

Mr. Price's acquaintance with political campaigns seems acutely academic and remote. Political campaigns are not carefully rehearsed theatrical performances in which the stage manager orders no "concentration of demonstrations in the Eastern Province," "no side-tracking by incidents or provocations." Provocateurs and the government don't take their cues from the producer. But Liberals of his ilk need no great insight into methods of political organisation and struggle, since they believe they will bring the Nationalist regime crashing to the ground not by people's fights and mass struggles, but at the sound of Liberal polemic and the weight of their argument; or by the threat of the Liberals to take the Nationalist Government before a Court packed with Nationalist judges if they try to infringe the constitution.

## **TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC UNITY**

By **NELSON MANDELA**

**T**HE struggle for democracy in South Africa is growing stronger every day. The political organisations of the oppressed people are forging stronger ties between themselves and the masses. A high degree of political understanding has been achieved. The people have become more conscious of their strength and they cry defiance to the racial policies of the Government. In the past, we talked



of the struggle of the African people, the Indian struggle and the struggle of the Coloured people. There was co-ordination neither among these groups nor with those white progressives who fought for equality. But today the people have come to realise the urgent necessity of mobilising, through their respective organisations, all democrats, black and white, to resist and conquer reaction by united effort.

As far back as 1946, the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress issued a joint declaration in which they announced a policy of co-operation between their respective organisations on matters of common interest. Since then and especially from 1950, the Congresses have faithfully adhered to this policy. In opening the Sixth Annual Conference of the Natal Indian Congress in February this year, Chief Albert Luthuli, the President-General of the A.N.C. declared that notwithstanding the deliberate incitement of Africans against Indians by the Government and their agents, responsible African public opinion was against the expatriation of Indians. He reiterated the desire of Africans to see peace, goodwill and progress flourish in the country and to work for the creation of a partnership in the system of governing the country as would give all people in the Union, regardless of colour, race, creed or origin, a voice in the government of the country. During the same Conference, Dr. G. M. Naicker, President of the S.A.I.C., stated that it was the task of progressive Non-European leaders in South Africa to do everything in their power to unite the country's oppressed people for their liberation. That unity, continued Dr. Naicker, could only be created in the process of united action in struggles against all injustices that flow from the policies of apartheid and segregation. Recently, a new Coloured body — the South African Coloured People's Organisation — was formed. Speaking on its policy, Dr. R. van der Ross, a member of the Executive Committee, is reported by the Advance of the 20th August, 1953, as saying:

"As long as we accept the idea that we are superior to the African, we have ~~no~~ legitimate claim to the rights now enjoyed by Europeans; we must work alongside the African

The urge for united action is not confined to Non-European organisations. There are European bodies in the country who feel that the time has come to forge, through the respective national organisations, bonds of unity among all those who fight for consistent democracy. For many years now the Springbok Legion has openly and fearlessly proclaimed its firm belief in the co-operation of all organisations that fight for genuine and consistent demo-

crazy About the end of last year, European progressives in the Transvaal formed themselves into a Congress of Democrats to secure, among other things, fundamental rights for all South Africans regardless of race, creed or colour. It stands for the co-operation and unity of all those whose sense of justice is outraged by the criminal policies of the Government.

The trend towards interracial unity in which members of all South African nationalities combine for a lofty purpose can also be seen outside the field of politics. The policy of the South African Peace Congress which was held in Johannesburg during the month of August this year was conceived in a spirit of the unity of all men and women of goodwill. The striking feature of the struggle today is, therefore, the pressing need being felt for co-ordination and democratic unity.

Attempts are, however, being made by certain elements to undermine this progressive trend. These elements range from the futile lamentations and the mischievous frenzies of Mr. J. K. Ngubane, the reactionary provincial of Phoenix, to the antics of the political abstentionists of the so-called Unity Movement of Cape Town. Mr. Ngubane has repeatedly criticised this line in the columns of the Indian Opinion, a paper founded by the late Mahatma Gandhi in 1903 and which was then a mouthpiece of the Indian people but which now expresses only Manilal Gandhi's opinions. The substance of his fantastic accusations, is that the Defiance Campaign was forced on Congress by the Transvaal; that it was a disastrous step, the biggest political fraud ever foisted on the people and accuses Mr. W. M. Sisulu for the alleged failure. That Dr. Dadoo and the "Dadoo wing of the South African Indian Congress" wield an influence on events out of proportion to the Indian's actual contribution to the joint struggle. He warns against what he styles "underground leftists," and openly invites the secession of the other provinces of the A.N.C. from headquarters.

In making these vague and unsubstantiated generalisations, Mr. Ngubane has deliberately elected to forget the record attendance of delegates from all provinces at the A.N.C. Conference held in Bloemfontein in December, 1951, where it was unanimously resolved to launch defiance. In saying that the Campaign was a disastrous failure he contradicts his own statement published in the Indian Opinion of the 6th February, 1953, that "It (the Defiance Campaign) has won for them (Congress leaders) world-wide respect and admiration." He is ignorant of the tremendous impact the Campaign has had on the people, the high degree of political consciousness that has been achieved, the change over from the vacillating

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\* Since this article was written, a South African Congress of Democrats, on a Union-wide scale has been established at a national conference held in Johannesburg.



policies of the past to the militant and uncompromising programmes of continued action that are now being prosecuted, the powerful impetus that has been given to the struggle against racial discrimination and the spirit of resistance that has been forged. He is completely blind to the fact that Dr. Dadoo is the honoured and undisputed leader of the entire Indian people, that Mr. Sisulu has acquired immense prestige for the efficient and courageous manner in which he and the other leaders, prosecuted the most dynamic programme of political action ever launched jointly by the oppressed people of South Africa. Shut up in his Phoenix conclave and far removed from his own folk, he naturally is unaware of the high esteem and greater affection in which the two leaders who have attracted his venom are held by the rank and file of the entire democratic camp and that the two have played a leading rôle in forging the imperishable iron brotherhood that holds together our respective communities. Mr. Ngubane has already met a crushing rebuff for not a single individual either from within or outside the movement has been enticed by his subversive activities which ring like a lone voice dolefully lamenting the good old days of racial diatribes and Communist bogeys which have completely vanished from the democratic camp.

Mr. Ngubane's racism and provincialism is matched only by the hypocrisy of the Unity-Movement crowd. They have occasionally proclaimed themselves in favour of the unity of the oppressed people in the country. But whenever a call has been made for all progressive organisations to join hands and fight against oppression in united manner, they have consistently stood aloof. Think of the National Day of Protest in 1950, the Train Apartheid Resistance Committee, the Defiance Campaign, the struggle against the removal of the Coloured people from the common roll, all of which offered infinite opportunities for real and genuine unity among the people, and the persistent refusal of the Unity Movement to play its part. It is precisely because of this fatal contradiction between their professions and their actual behaviour that many progressive individuals and organisations are deserting them and joining the ranks of those who consistently fight for true unity and action. Today, there is more movement for unity outside the Unity Movement than within it and, in point of fact, the Gools and the Tabatas are subverting and disrupting the unity of the democratic forces in the country. The plain fact, however, is that the struggle for democracy has reached a stage where it cannot be halted by the race-bating opinions of Mr. Ngubane and the hypocrisy of the Unity Movement. Today there are rumblings in every village from the Cape Peninsula to Zoutpansberg and from Lobatsi to Nongoma and that rumbling force is one of democratic unity and continued action.

September 24, 1953

# LANGUAGES: ANOTHER VIEW

By ALAN DOYLE

"In actual fact, languages did not develop by the destruction of existing languages and the creation of new ones, but by extending and perfecting the basic elements of existing languages; the transition of languages from one quality to another taking the form not of an explosion, not of the destruction at one blow of the old and the creation of a new, but by the gradual and prolonged accumulation of the elements of the new quality, of the new language structure, and the gradual dying away of the elements of the old quality."

**L**IBERATION has performed a real service by opening its columns to a discussion of the language question. To any oppressed nationality this is a matter of considerable importance — a fact which our leaders do not seem fully to have appreciated.

It is disappointing however that both contributors, thus far, have by-passed and overlooked the really dynamic and important aspect of this issue as a matter of practical politics.

"Dr. Nhlapo's approach to this question, his formulation and treatment of it, show a failure on his part to grasp the essentials of the situation. This failure emanates from his inability to appreciate the fundamental fact that the language problem is, on both the national and international level, a part of the social question, which is the central problem of our day." is the perfectly correct comment of Mr. Raboroko. Later in his article ("Liberation," September, 1953) he writes:

"The language problem in Africa can only be seen properly as one aspect of our struggle for emancipation from white imperialism."

Mr. Raboroko is well aware of the mistaken approach of Dr. Nhlapo. It is a pity, therefore, that instead of dealing with the implications of these correct statements, he falls into the same error as Dr. Nhlapo and occupies himself with idealistic speculations about a future "common language" for Africa. In speculating about what language may be adopted one day in a free Africa, he overlooks the very real and major language question which today, immediately, faces all the people of unfree Africa as we know it.

That question, in a nutshell, is the blatant suppression of the mother-tongue of the people throughout our continent. This characteristic feature of imperialism is not the least of the burdens which Africa has to bear. It goes without saying that without the winning of their language rights by the people, emancipation from colonialism is unthinkable.

Mr. Raboroko confuses the proper and progressive demand for the rights and status of the mother-language with "tribalism." This profoundly mistaken attitude lies at the roots of his incorrect approach. It is not "tribalism" but a universally democratic hu-



manism that leads us to demand for Zulu and Sesotho, Xhosa and Setswana, Shangaan and Tshivenda, the same status, legally, educationally and in every other way, that are at present enjoyed exclusively by English and Afrikaans in the Union.

We may share his desire for the ultimate merging of these local languages into an all-African and indeed ultimately a world wide means of communication. But we shall fail utterly in an understanding of the basically dialectical processes of history unless we see that such merging is impossible except through the full and free development of the mother-languages of all peoples. Only after the removal of all artificial barriers to the development of present languages can we hope to attain the voluntary union of languages which the future holds.

To the African, who is made a "foreigner" in his own country by the fact that government commerce, industry, education, court proceedings, public information (the press, promulgation of laws, the radio) etc., are all conducted and transacted in languages other than his own, the language question appears in a very different light to that in which it appears to Dr. Nhlapo and Mr. Raboroko. It means that he has to battle in a strange tongue, at work and in every sphere of his life. His boss swears at him in English, the policeman in Afrikaans, because he cannot understand their languages. His children at school have to battle with textbooks on difficult subjects in languages other than his own. It is true that in South African society, the basic handicap of an African is his skin and other racial characteristics. But even if every "colour-bar" in the land were lifted tomorrow, the African would still labour under a tremendous handicap if his language were subject to an unequal status.

Pride in and love for one's mother tongue is common to all self-respecting people. It is bitterly painful to every African patriot to see how our languages are despised by the oppressor, and even, alas, by our own "intellectuals." This is a mark of their isolation from their own people. It must be overcome if our educated African young men and women are to be of use in the struggle of the people for emancipation. They must learn to think in "the vernacular" — to use the contemptuous expression of the "educated" Latinists of the middle ages referring to the dialects of the common people.. Our politicians must demand the people's rights to use their mother Xhosa, Setswana, Zulu etc., in all walks and fields of life. Our poets and writers must glorify and enrich our languages.

Dr. Nhlapo and even Mr. Raboroko, their eyes fixed on some distant goal, are blind to the crying problem before their noses. This blindness, however, is merely a reflection of the failure of the African National Congress itself to pay proper attention to this essential feature of a national movement.

There are reasons which explain, but do not excuse. this

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