

## Background to Politics

# THE COLOURED PEOPLE

By "CAPETONIAN"

THE face of Coloured politics in South Africa has changed dramatically. For decades the country's "step-children" have stood on the sidelines, confused and bewildered by the forces of white and black nationalism. Then suddenly came Mr. Harold Macmillan's "Wind of Change" warning to the nation in February 1960. There followed Sharpeville, Langa, and a five-month state of emergency from April to August.

But it was Philip Kgosana's march in Cape Town that really started the Coloured political awakening. Coloureds thought seriously about the pass laws and the Urban Areas Act. They were not directly affected by these; but they knew about and felt the prevailing economic pinch and they saw the sinister threat of job reservation.

### Put House in Order

They realised the implications of group areas, they had lost their common roll vote—about which Africans had warned them years before—and they were being denied the freedom of "open" universities.

They considered the overall picture politically, and were forced to associate themselves with the African under general apartheid laws.

But how were they to act? How were the Coloureds to present a challenge as a third force allied with the African? It was essential that the Coloureds should first put their own political house in order.

Six men, including George Golding and Edgar Deane, signed a statement calling on Coloureds to remain aloof during the stay-at-home call to Africans last year. That controversial decision shook Coloureds from their traditional political apathy. The South African Coloured People's Organisation felt itself faced with a challenge from African leadership which it had to accept. Either Coloureds were to drift or they were to link up with Africans in a common goal of total political, economic and social equality.



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"Did you get a permit to carry people of unclassified race?"

—Cape Times.

But life was bitter after the Emergency ended, with hundreds of released detainees trying to knit together the torn threads of their disrupted lives. There were five key men in Cape Town among the Coloured detainees: Barney Desai, George Peake, Reg. September, Alex la Guma and "Toefy" Bardien. They felt their responsibility for the Coloureds' future political stand in the face of Verwoerdian extremism.

The first opportunity for testing Coloured political opinion came with the Cape Town municipal elections. In Ward 10 (Athlone-Lansdowne) Messrs. R. E. Viljoen, J. J. Shroeder and H. J. M. Holmes were firmly entrenched. This area was a Unity Movement—Anti-C.A.D. (Coloured Affairs Department) stronghold of "non-collaboration". But in Ward Six (District Six—Woodstock—Salt River) the sitting Non-White councillors were veteran Mrs. "Cissy" Gool, Mr. Hoosain Parker and Mr. Edgar Deane. Few Non-White ratepayers had any quarrel with Mrs. Gool or Mr. Parker, but trade unionist Edgar Deane, a powerful figure strongly backed by middle-class Coloureds, presented a target. The "new-look" Coloured People's Congress (formerly SACPO) decided to oppose Mr. Deane and replace him with a working man's leader.

The choice of rival candidate fell on Mr. George Peake, ex-treason trialist and ex-detainee, with an "equality for all" and "no concessions" outlook.

The result in Ward Six—a defeat for Deane, who polled 900 votes to Peake's 1,500—was a political eye-opener. A new force was sweeping through Coloured ranks, leading towards an alignment with the aspirations of Africans.

The "New Deal for Coloureds" had previously evoked much ridicule and contempt. The few con-

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servatives who had been prepared to welcome concessions for Coloureds (they never materialised, of course) had themselves been doubtful of strings being attached. When Dr. Verwoerd finally rejected concessions for Coloureds, he turned them away, probably for ever, from their dubious link with White South Africa.

From this stage (November 1960) Members of Parliament started expressing alarm that Coloureds might be driven to a link-up with Africans. Some "Coloured representatives" pleaded in the Assembly that Coloureds had stood by the side of Whites in the face of internal crisis, but this fell on deaf ears.

To understand the Coloured man's position, one must realise that he is tired of the perpetual dead-end in industry and commerce. He is tired of being an office-boy, messenger, menial factory worker or general labourer, though he might possess a junior or even a senior certificate. He is tired of "Coloured" wages, bread-line survival, of living in crowded slum conditions, of being regarded as an inferior—tired, in fact, of second-class citizenship. Do you know of one Coloured architect, engineer or pharmacist?

Who can be content with such a lot? With a separate-roll vote, what can four representatives do—except plead—in a 157-seat White Assembly?

### Maritzburg Conference

The All-African Conference at Maritzburg—and the ensuing decision of the National Action Council to ask all Non-Whites and sympathetic Whites to participate in a three-day stay-at-home protest at the end of May met with an enthusiastic response from Coloureds throughout South Africa. It resulted—although indirectly—in the proposed Coloured Convention in June to be attended by 500 delegates from political, religious, cultural, social and sporting bodies.

The wide social and economic barriers amongst Coloureds themselves have been the cause of disunity in the past, but recent events have changed all that. Dr. Verwoerd has himself changed it—and speeded up the Coloured awakening to its present-day mood of militancy.

In the Transvaal, Coloureds have formed themselves into a strong organisation (Transvaal Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) to combat apartheid and link up with the Africans.

In Durban, former Coloured sectionalists have joined the Convention movement. In Port Elizabeth there is full solidarity between Coloured and African. East London, too, has joined the common Non-White Front.

A stand is being made for full citizenship rights

## ABOLISH COLOUR BAR

THE movement initiated by leaders of Coloured opinion to unite the Coloured community in working for the abolition of the colour bar and full citizenship for all South Africans was welcomed by the Black Sash in a public statement.

The national president, Mrs. E. Stott, said: "We would be glad to offer them all the assistance we can in their efforts to call a national convention representing all races, to seek agreement on the terms upon which all races can live and work peacefully together in South Africa."

for all South Africans irrespective of race, colour or creed; Coloureds now will not accept any concessions offered to their exclusive "group" at the expense of Africans or Indians.

This "no concession" line was demonstrated by men such as Dr. Richard van der Ross, Mr. M. A. Gierdien, Progressive Party executive member, and Councillor George Peake, at their much-publicised "secret talks" with worried Afrikaners at Stellenbosch recently. This "rebel" front of Whites, disturbed about the disastrous deterioration of race relations, sought a lead from the eight Coloured leaders present at these informal talks. The Coloureds told them: "You are partly responsible for the grave political situation in South Africa to-day. Do something about it from within your ranks."

Pleas by the Afrikaners present for the proposed three-day stay-at-home to be called off "because the Republic is so dear to us" were rejected. The Coloured leaders stated firmly that they could accept no concession for Coloureds only, could not call off the strike and could not attend further talks unless African leaders were present.

This firm stand by both moderate and militant Coloureds represents the present political mood: equality for all.

Meanwhile, the Coloured People's Congress has made dramatic strides since March this year to capture the Coloured rank-and-file throughout the country. Coloured People's Congress officials are also on the Planning Committee of the proposed Coloured National Convention.

Cape Moslems have joined the political movement—Islam has no place for discrimination.

Coloureds have not become anti-White but they are indeed bitter—bitter about apartheid signs, in buses, trains, post offices, bitter that they must pay equal rates for separate but unequal amenities, bitter about group areas. It appears to them unquestionable that their destiny lies with the African to present an irresistible challenge to the present system of racial discrimination in South Africa.