

LIBERATION

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Editorial

WRECKERS AT WORK

“People seem to be alarmed at the fact that there may be a so-called Right wing, Centre and Left wing in the Congress. To me it is a healthy sign in any organisation when people freely express their points of view.”

—President A. J. Luthuli.

IT is always necessary to distinguish between constructive criticism of a movement, the criticism of those who wish to help it, and the attacks and criticisms of those who wish to disrupt the movement. The African National Congress, like any other serious political movement, should and we believe does welcome the first sort of criticism whether coming from its own members or from well-disposed observers, for only by coolly analysing its work and heeding useful suggestions can a movement become strong.

When, however, the police or the Native Affairs Department attack the Congress, all politically conscious people are well aware that they do not wish, by their criticism, to improve Congress but to weaken or destroy it. Similarly, all are aware that organisations of the type of the “Bantu National Congress” or the “National-Minded Bloc” are not on the side of Congress in its struggle against apartheid and inequality. On the contrary, they are on the side of the Government, and they seek to

gain the favour of the Nationalists in their fight against Congress. Knowing who such critics are and what they want, we shall be on our guard against distortion, lies and slander, for these are the weapons that are customarily used against the leaders of the people's struggle for liberation.

"New" Critics of Congress

Recently, a whole chorus of critics of Congress has arisen. These critics claim to be friends, or even members of Congress. Their methods, however, as we shall see, are far from friendly. Their methods reveal their real aims.

Let us begin with the letter sent to the annual conference of the A.N.C. in December by Dr. A. B. Xuma, a former Congress President. It is rather remarkable that Dr. Xuma should have sent such a letter. Since the end of his term as President he has shown no interest in Congress at all. During all the bitter years of the Nationalists, in which the movement has gone through one hard struggle after another, in which scores of the most active and experienced leaders have been victimised by the Government, he has maintained inactivity and silence. In the Western Areas campaign, the Doctor, who is a Sophiatown landowner, maintained his own separate landowners' organisation, separate from Congress and not at all co-operative. It is doubtful whether he has attended a single A.N.C. meeting in the past five years, or whether he is even a member of the A.N.C. in good standing any more. We mention these facts not in order to belittle Dr. Xuma's past services to Congress, but in order to show how little qualified he is to comment on Congress **now**, his utter isolation from and ignorance of the movement as it is today. When he writes that he is "alarmed and distressed at certain tendencies that have developed in Congress in recent years," he is speaking not of what he knows, but of what someone else has told him.

The Congress Alliance

Dr. Xuma writes that the A.N.C. has "lost its identity as a national liberation movement with a policy of its own and a distinctly African leadership." "One hears or reads," he adds, "of statements by the Congresses and hardly ever gets the statement of the A.N.C." The suggestion, obviously, is that because Congress has entered into an alliance with other organisations having similar aims, it has somehow "lost its identity." Does Dr. Xuma disapprove of the alliance with the S.A.I.C., the C.O.D., the S.A.C.P.O. and the S.A.C.T.U.? He does not say so. In fact, the beginnings of that alliance date back to the period of his own Presidency. The famous "Xuma-Dadoo Agreement" of the 'forties began that friendly association of the two Congresses which—cemented by the joint struggles of the defiance campaign and other common struggles, and reinforced by the new organisations of democratic Euro-

peans, Coloured people and trade unionists which were stimulated and inspired by those struggles—has developed into the firm comradeship of the present Congress movement. It would be strange if Dr. Xuma would now advocate the breaking up of that alliance.

Is it true that only statements from "the Congresses" are now issued, and none from the A.N.C.? Certainly not. Naturally, when it is necessary and appropriate, joint statements are issued. But the A.N.C. as such continues to issue public statements on a wide variety of subjects. In fact we doubt whether the A.N.C. has ever in its history issued more statements on all sorts of current events than during the past few years. It has its own Bulletin now, and is planning a newspaper of its own.

So, if you examine this charge of Dr. Xuma's carefully, you find that it is vague. He does not say exactly what he is criticising, or what he wants. His allegation about insufficient statements being issued is not very sound, either. He does not specify any issue on which he thinks Congress was at fault in not issuing a statement.

"Disintegrating into Splinters"

Dr. Xuma's next criticism is that the movement is "disintegrating into splinters." In support of this statement, he points to the so-called "National-minded Bloc" and to the "Bantu National Congress." But surely Dr. Xuma knows that both of these organisations are insignificant, tiny groups, separate from and openly hostile to Congress? What have such pro-apartheid groups as the Bhengu-ites, sponsored by the Government, to do with the Congress? Congress is fighting a life-and-death struggle against the tyranny of apartheid. It can have no place for those who, whether for Judas-money or out of ignorance, support the Government. It is not true that Congress is "disintegrating." Dr. Xuma's statement is based on wrong information.

Dr. Xuma goes on to make a third allegation: fear of criticism and lack of internal democracy. He says: "Many who have dared to criticise the hierarchy have been expelled . . . without a democratic hearing." That is a serious charge. Who has been expelled for criticising the "hierarchy?" Who was denied a hearing? Dr. Xuma does not give a single example. When making serious charges it is better to substantiate them with facts. Otherwise you may be accused of malice and mischief-making.

We have said enough of Dr. Xuma's attack to indicate his methods. He attacks the Freedom Charter without indicating a single clause or phrase with which he disagrees. He attacks the defiance campaign, the Congress campaigns against the Western Areas scheme and the Bantu Education Act. We cannot remember any alternative policies put forward by him at any time, nor does he do so in this letter. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he is "looking for points" in order to attack the present leadership of Congress. The conference did not take his letter very seriously, and quite rightly so. It only becomes important and significant in the light of other things that are being said.

"The World"

"The World" is the new name of the newspaper that was formerly known as the "Bantu World," and which was expelled from the A.N.C. conference in December. Its editor, Dr. Nhlapo, claims to be guided by the principle of "absolute truth." Since December, however, "The World" has been caught red-handed in quite a number of departures from the truth. During the months of February and March alone, it had to publish the following repudiations of its own lies:—

- A letter from Mr. J. B. Mafora, President of the O.F.S. province of the A.N.C. denying the "disgusting" report in the "World" that the Free State A.N.C. had opposed the Freedom Charter. "For the Free State, the Freedom Charter is a lead—we accepted it at the historical Congress of the People which was held at Kliptown."
- A letter from Dr. A. E. Letele, Treasurer-General of the A.N.C., refuting the "World" allegation that he had said there were things in the Xuma letter "best left for the ears of the Executive Committee alone." Wrote Dr. Letele: "One can overlook (sometimes) a misquotation of one's speech, but the appending of a downright fabrication of one's speech is malicious . . . Neither the outrageous statement quoted nor anything even resembling it was at any time made by me."
- A letter from Mr. A. Gumede, Assistant Secretary of the Natal A.N.C. "categorically denying" a statement in the 'World' "that Natal would secede from the A.N.C. if Chief Luthuli were not re-elected as President." The Natal delegation, and President Luthuli himself, were "much aggrieved and damaged" by this statement, wrote Mr. Gumede.
- A letter from Mr. A. P. Mda, refuting a statement in the "World" that he belonged to a "nationalist group" in the A.N.C. "In any event your paper appears to me to be more than just interested in factional groupings in Congress. Why?" shrewdly asks Mr. Mda.

Thus each of the excellent writers of the above letters have stuffed "The World's" lies down its own throat. But the paper did not comment on any of the letters we have quoted. It did not apologise for misinforming its readers. It did not promise not to lie any more. In this, "The World" shows contempt for its readers.

Why did "The World" publish this misinformation? Each and every one of its lies implies that there were "splits" which do not in fact exist. We can only conclude that the newspaper reports non-existent splits because it hopes thus to encourage real ones, and to discredit the A.N.C.

Mr. Ngubane

We now come to Mr. Jordan K. Ngubane, who writes a weekly column entitled "African Viewpoint" in the Natal paper "Indian Opinion." It is difficult to write at all temperately about Mr. Ngubane.

His weekly outpourings show a reckless disregard not only for facts but also for the principles of journalistic ethics. He has recently announced his conversion to the Liberal Party, but it would be hard to find anything more illiberal than his methods and views—prejudices would be a better word. He surpasses Dr. Xuma and even "The World" in the irresponsibility of his allegations, the venom of his insinuations, and the obvious malice which he displays towards the A.N.C.

Here is a sample of Mr. Ngubane's technique. He wants to "prove" that Congress is "split" (his favourite theme) between the "Centre" and the "Left," and he takes as an example of the Centre the President-General of the African National Congress. We should remark here that—we are sure without permission—Mr. Ngubane constantly makes free with the name and the alleged opinions of Mr. Luthuli.

Now, Mr. Ngubane speculates that "if he got a passport and an invitation" to go to Britain, Mr. Luthuli would accept and go. Then he goes on to speculate that "the Sisulu wing" would **most probably** decline an invitation from the West." It is "**quite possible,**" he writes, that "they" would "turn down an invitation to visit India." "**I think,**" he continues, "they would go to Bucharest, Moscow and Peking." Then, in the next sentence, this extraordinary journalist goes straight on, after this series of guesses and speculations of **his own creation:**

"**That shows** how divided Congress is at the moment." (Our emphasis throughout.)

On the contrary, all it **shows** is how illogical and confused Mr. Ngubane is "at the moment"; how this new recruit to the Liberal Party mistakes his own sick fancies for real facts. Nor is this untypical of Mr. Ngubane's methods.

Red-Baiting

He keeps repeating and insinuating that the African National Congress is "dominated by the Left," and moreover by unspecified persons or organisations outside Congress. In "Indian Opinion" of February 17, he wrote: "My own view is that Dr. Xuma's letter was treated with contempt because the leaders of the African National Congress and their followers are no longer the real masters of the movement."

This is an extremely grave allegation, as injurious as it is insulting to the leaders of Congress, and not least to the President, of whom Mr. Ngubane affects to be so great an admirer. What proofs, what revelations, what facts has he in support of this grave charge? Not one. It is "my view." That is all.

And he repeats it again and again. The A.N.C. he writes, in the same article, "is not controlled by the African people." It is "little more than a front serving the aim of its temporary masters." Who are then in control of the A.N.C.? Mr. Ngubane's answer will not surprise those who know the technique of the smearing red-baiter. "The direction Congress is taking will lead straight to Moscow."

Of course, we have heard this before. General Rademeyer, in spite of the fact that his special branch of the police have taken drastic steps to ban alleged Communists from the Congresses and from all political activity, last year accused the Congress of the People organisers—that is, the leaders of the Congresses—of running a “Communist plot.” Having made the allegation, he sought to produce evidence to prove it by means of constant raids and other police activities, before, during and after the Congress of the People. So far the lack of any prosecution would indicate that they failed to find any such evidence. Yet Mr. Ngubane continues to parrot these allegations—which if they were true, would in this unhappy South Africa of ours be matters not for debate in the “Indian Opinion” but for suppression by the police.

When a man starts writing in this unbalanced way, flinging around the gravest allegations without a jot or tittle of evidence, then you must know he is not out for serious discussion or constructive criticism, but purely and simply to make mischief.

Driving a Wedge

Mr. Ngubane never tires of trying to drive a wedge between President Luthuli and his colleagues in the National Executive of the African National Congress, and there is no mean insinuation to which he is not prepared to stoop in these endeavours. Perhaps the lowest depths were reached in an article in the “Indian Views” of February 3, in which he wrote that the Congress leaders had deliberately sabotaged the campaign against the Western Areas removal in order to discredit the President!

“The whole campaign (against Western Areas Removal) was a cynical move to make Mr. Luthuli’s leadership of the A.N.C. look ridiculous in the eyes of the world . . . the whole thing was a Leftist trick to undermine Mr. Luthuli’s hold on the movement.”

Just think what he is saying. That the leaders of a great people’s movement like the African National Congress, of set purpose, went and caused the failure of an important campaign. That their purpose was to discredit themselves, because by so doing they would at the same time discredit their own President, whom, says Mr. Ngubane—and nobody else but Mr. Ngubane—they want to get rid of. Have you ever heard anything like it? No sane and rational person could believe such stuff: it is the raving of a mind clouded by prejudice.

Does Mr. Ngubane himself solemnly believe this fantastic rubbish? If he does, then it is a pitiful example of what anti-Communist prejudice and red-baiting can do to the mind of one who has shown himself on other occasions to be an intelligent man and an able writer. We wonder whether “Indian Opinion” imagines it is furthering the cause of Indian-African unity by giving currency to this type of baseless slander against the elected leadership of the A.N.C. And we might remind them of the words of the illustrious founder of “Indian Opinion” concerning the aims of that very paper:—

“In the very first month of **Indian Opinion**, I had realised that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy.”

—M. K. Gandhi, “Autobiography” Vol. II.

What Are They After?

The methods of these “new” critics of Congress preclude any sort of reasoned discussion with them at present. For they never commit themselves to criticising a single decision, statement or action on its merits. They never quote a Congress document, statement or resolution. Instead, they spread wild, airy generalisations, they invent fantastic plots and conspiracies, they make irresponsible statements.

This sort of “criticism” does not aim at honest discussion. Its real aims are clear enough. They are:

Firstly, to create disunity and dissension in the ranks of the African National Congress, and to isolate the left-wing working-class element in Congress;

Secondly, to separate the African National Congress from its allies—the Indian Congress, the Coloured People’s Organisation, the Congress of Democrats and the Congress of Trade Unions;

Thirdly, to oppose and belittle the Freedom Charter as the common programme of all these organisations.

The main weapons on which the critics rely are also very clear. They rely on African chauvinism and the spirit of racial exclusiveness. They rely on red-baiting and anti-Communist prejudice. Is it a coincidence that these are also the favourite weapons of the Nationalist Party?

We believe that these efforts at disruption will fail, and that the unity of the African National Congress and the Congress movement is more firmly based today than it has ever been.

The Struggle for Unity

But that unity has only been achieved in the process of constant struggle, and it can only be maintained and strengthened by means of continued struggle against all, whether inside or outside the Congress, who seek to wreck and disrupt it.

What do we mean by Congress unity? Do we mean that a single philosophy and outlook should be imposed on the whole movement? No: as a national liberation movement there is room within the A.N.C. and its sister organisations for men and women of all shades of political and religious belief. We are in full agreement with the statesmanlike and broadminded view expressed by Congress’ President in the quotation that stands at the head of this article.

Does Congress unity imply that the A.N.C., for example, should become a political party composed of and representing a single class? No: the struggle for national emancipation brings together many classes: workers, peasants, business and professional men—despite the deep cleavages between them.

Congress unity, then, does not imply a uniform ideology, or a homogeneous class composition. But it **does** mean the subordination of differences in the common struggle. The alliance of the Congresses does not mean their merging into one, or the loss of their separate identities. But it does mean their close brotherly association against the common enemy: monstrous White domination, and for the achievement of a common programme: the grand, inspiring Freedom Charter.

The people's alliance which has grown up in our country has an extraordinarily difficult and dangerous task before it. Its adversary, the South African ruling class, is a formidable one. It is backed by and closely linked with foreign imperialism. It is armed and ready to use violence, and it will stop at nothing to retain its oppressive and unjust rule. It is ruthless, cunning and desperate. This dangerous adversary will be defeated, and the people shall govern, for the tide of history is running for freedom. But how soon that victory will be won, and how costly it will prove, will depend largely upon how speedily and effectively the Congress movement, at the head of the freedom-fighters of South Africa can accomplish their great tasks:— to rally and organise the overwhelming majority of the people, African, Indian, Coloured and European; to spread clear thinking, unity and courage among the masses; to win the people's understanding of and devotion to the common aims and aspirations emblazoned in the Charter; to inspire the masses with determination to win the Charter.

Those who seek to divide the ranks of the people, to sow discord and to spread confusion, are—whether or not they realise it—holding back the advance of freedom and helping the enemies of the people to perpetuate apartheid and minority domination. The so-called "Africanists," the Xumas and the Ngubanes, should honestly and self-critically re-examine their position in the light of the endorsement of the Freedom Charter by the African National Congress in special conference at Easter. The struggle for freedom is on. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the Congress—and we are sure a friendly welcome awaits all who now come forward to help, whatever their position might have been before the Easter Conference. We are sure, too, that the movement will know in what light to regard those who, despite the overwhelming majority decision at Conference, call themselves Congressmen yet continue to belittle the Charter and try to split the people's alliance.

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It was with much gratification that we noticed, in a recent issue of the progressive Cape journal "Isizwe," a tribute to our December editorial on Bantu Education. It proposed that the article be translated and republished in pamphlet form. We regret that our present position

makes it impossible to act upon this suggestion. But we have no objection to any progressive group translating and reprinting, with due acknowledgment, material from this magazine.

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We wish to congratulate Mr. Duma Nokwe, a frequent and valued contributor to our journal, on his recent admission to the Transvaal Bar, the first African to be so admitted.

The Story of the Coloured Vote, and

THE MYTH OF "CAPE LIBERALISM"

By "AUSI"

UNLESS its proceedings are ruled invalid, the Joint Parliamentary Session has at last destroyed the voting rights held by a section of the Cape electorate for more than a century. It is no condonation of this destruction of rights to point out that by 1956 the Coloured vote had itself dwindled to little more than a token: the shadow rather than the substance of democracy. The weight and effectiveness of the Coloured vote had, over a period of many years, both before and after Union, been steadily whittled away. In a very real sense, the death-knell of the Non-European franchise had been tolled not in 1956, but in 1909 and 1910, when the Act of Union was adopted by the Cape Parliament and endorsed by the Westminster Parliament.

To understand the full significance of the process which culminated at this year's Joint Session, we should briefly retrace the story of the Cape franchise up to the betrayal of 1910, paying particular attention to the rather shady and sinister role played by so-called Cape Liberalism.

It took a long time for representative institutions and self-government to come to the Cape Colony. Britain had captured the Colony, with a population of about 75,000, in 1806: thirty years after the