

# LIBERATION

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### Editorial

## VIOLENCE BREEDS VIOLENCE

**W**HEN rioting breaks out in the streets of Johannesburg, all our wise men of the Government and the Police and the City Council can talk about is the need for still more repressive measures, stricter "control," possible closing of the Mai Mai Beer Hall. It does not seem to occur to them that the rioting itself is the result of all their "control," their police measures, their utter failure to consider the needs of the African as a human being and a citizen. The other day, the Johannesburg City Council's Non-European Affairs Committee introduced a draconic new set of location regulations banning almost any sort of meeting among the tens of thousands of voteless Africans who live in the apartheid townships under the city's control. It took the combined protests of the Black Sash women, the Labour and Liberal Parties, the Congress of Democrats and other European organisations before the Committee would even recognise that there was something wrong. In

the end they agreed to reconsider the regulations, but only after their ex-Labour Party Chairman, Dr. Boris Wilson, had heatedly defended them.

How often, within recent months, have violent clashes taken place between Africans and the police! Every time Minister Swart is asked to appoint a judicial enquiry into one of these incidents, he scoffs at the idea. He does not link up these clashes with his own instructions to the police to shoot first. He regards them as a normal feature of life in South Africa and feels it would be absurd to hold an enquiry into each incident.

Crimes of violence are becoming more and more common in our cities. Every African knows it is not safe to walk in the townships at night. Hundreds are assaulted and robbed every week-end. The police offer additional protection—but only to householders with telephones in the White suburbs.

Every new repressive measure announced by the authorities can only serve to aggravate this situation. The resentment and frustration born of white baasskap, and intensified by eight years of fierce Nationalist rule; the endless acts of violence by police, foremen, officials and farmers; the intolerable threat to extend the passbook system to women, all these form the background to the flare-ups which are becoming more and more widespread and frequent. It has been said often enough (even, in its saner moments, by the United Party) that Nationalist rule is making South Africa into a prison. Prison is a rough school; we should not be surprised when the pupils show that they have learnt their lesson well.

## **THE MINISTERS CALL A CONFERENCE**

The Government remains deaf and blind to all these lessons. Their plan is simply to go on piling up mountains of repression, until the country becomes an armed camp. And Strijdom and other spokesmen keep on telling the world that it is quite mistaken about South Africa; the "natives" are really quite happy and contented. The African National Congress? A lot of agitators. The delegation of the Advisory Boards? Also agitators. Perhaps Dr. Verwoerd imagines that the sickening adulation from N.A.D. officials and Bantu school inspectors which he prints in "Bantu-Bantoe" is the real voice of the African people?

If so, perhaps the conference which has been decided upon by the African Interdenominational Ministers will wake him up. The ministers are to be congratulated in taking this step, for with the support of Congress, Advisory Boards and other bodies, the conference promises to be the most broadly representative of all shades of African opinion ever held.

Many important results may be hoped for from this conference. In the first place it is to be hoped that it will express such a complete and unambiguous rejection of apartheid, the Verwoerd system of legislation (including the Bantu Authorities Act, passes for women and Bantu Education) that it will be impossible for the Government ever again to

claim that its laws have African support, and impossible ever again for any Chief or other stooge to support them without exposing himself as a Quisling. Secondly, the Conference will render a tremendous service if it can arrive at an effective plan of action to unite all Africans in defence of their future and their very survival. Thirdly, it would be a splendid thing if the entire Conference could be persuaded to throw its support behind the Congress policy of inter-racial harmony and liberty and equality for all, as expressed in the Freedom Charter; though we are convinced, of course, that Congressmen present will not make such support a condition for co-operation with non-Congress Africans.

## **TRADE UNIONS—WHAT NEXT?**

Very significant, too, in another field, is the proposed all-in trade union conference suggested by the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions to consider the pressing economic problems facing the workers, and the proper reply by the Unions to the new Industrial Conciliation Act. The Act, which has been published but will only come into force on a date to be announced by the Government, is the death-warrant of the free trade union movement as we have hitherto known it in South Africa, as it affects unions of White, Coloured and Indian workers. African workers' unions, of course, have never enjoyed any legal status or recognition. Government policy is to kill these unions; they survive in spite of the Government. But unions without African members have been, to some extent protected. Once "registered" they could insist on the employers meeting them to reach industrial agreements, and these agreements had the force of law.

It must be admitted that in accepting this form of recognition, the non-African unions voluntarily crippled themselves. Excluding a large number of workers—the Africans—they were like a man who agrees to have an arm or a leg cut off. That is why these unions have been unable to resist all the Nationalists' anti-labour legislation, culminating in the terrible new Act. The Act now faces them with a most painful new decision. If they want to stay registered and recognised they will either have to accept White baasskap in the trade union movement or else split up into separate unions for Whites and Coloured workers. Is a union which is run by the White members alone really a trade union? Seeing that all the employers are Whites it is more likely to degenerate into a sort of company union! But on the other hand if the unions are split along racial lines this will merely play into the bosses' hands. They will be even more crippled than under the old I.C. Act.

But is there not a third alternative? Suppose that the great majority of the registered unions should refuse totally to co-operate in the implementation of this hateful law! Suppose they decided to have nothing to do with registration and the Labour Department until this Act has been repealed! The Act would not work for a day without the co-operation of the registered trade unions. And if they were joined in such a common struggle for the repeal of anti-labour legislation, this would at once put an end to the wretched suspicion and antagonism between White and non-White workers which this Act was designed to

bring about: each section fearful that the other will break away and collar part of the accumulated funds and assets of the organisation; each contemplating running to see the Minister to try and get him to reserve certain classes of skilled work for "their own" racial group. What a sorry spectacle!

Yet it could all be ended overnight if the majority of unions would wake up to the true function of their organisations, would realise that a worker is a worker and the only hope in standing together, would reach out a helping hand to organise the myriads of unorganised African fellow-workers, would join hands in a common resolve to **refuse to work the I.C. Act.**

That is why it would be a major tragedy for the working class if the T.U.C. and other co-ordinating bodies refuse to accept the invitation to join in convening this conference and if their affiliated organisations stand aside from it. For the icy breath of the world crisis of the capitalist system has already reached this country; already in the clothing and other industries unemployment is spreading fast. And how are the workers to meet this crisis if they continue divided into water-tight race compartments, White, Coloured, Indian and African workers jostling and fighting over the few crumbs that fall from the rich man's table?

The true strength of the workers lies not in a scrap of Government paper—the registration certificate—but in the unconquerable unity of men and women of every race and colour, in factory, shop and mine, expressed through powerful industrial trade unions embracing every employee in each industry, from the labourer, the machine-minder and the operative to the skilled journeyman or artisan.

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# THE CAPITALIST CRISIS AND SOUTH AFRICA

(Part 2)

By "ECONOMIST"

The first part of this article appeared in the June issue of **LIBERATION**. We regret that owing to printing difficulties and delays in the appearance of the magazine it was not possible to print this article complete at the time it was written—now some months ago. The writer predicted various trends which have now developed along the lines he indicated.

**I**F crisis is latent in America, it is much closer in Britain. But here the problem is inflation, not deflation—too few goods to meet the demand, not too many. The contradictions of Britain's economy express themselves in what is known as "the balance of payments" problem—the problem of paying for essential imports with a lesser total of