

Liberation

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NEW AFRICA and the UNION

THE All-African People's Conference in Ghana last December, as we confidently predicted in our editorial written on the eve of that Conference, spelt out large the meaning that "we are living in the closing stages of the era of European domination over Africa." The Conference registered a mighty advance in the struggles of the peoples of this continent for freedom from alien control, for self-government and independence. Inspired by the example of Asia, where hundreds of millions of people have in a brief decade won the right to political independence, by the Charter of the United Nations, which promises equality, democracy and human rights to all men, the people of Africa, across the length and breadth of this mighty Continent, have built up determined national liberation movements. These movements have joined hands across the artificial boundaries which the imperialists set up in their "scramble for Africa" seventy or eighty years ago. They are building a powerful alliance to free Africa from the twin evils of colonialism and racial discrimination.

The imperialist powers are being forced to understand the reality of this great alliance, this unconquerable will for freedom, that has grown up in Africa. Just as Britain has been compelled to give way, step by step, in Asia — in India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya — so she is being compelled to concede self-government step by step in Africa. Egypt, Ghana, the Sudan have already escaped from the Empire; tomorrow Nigeria will be

self-governing, even Basutoland — in the heart of Apartheidia — has gained far-reaching concessions; soon there will be nothing left of Britain's great African Empire.

France, too, is being compelled to swallow the bitter lessons she learnt in Indo-China and the Middle East. Though French soldiers and white Algerian colonists continue to wage an incredibly cruel — and hopeless — struggle against the Algerian national liberation front, far-reaching concessions have been won in France's other "possessions" in Africa. Guinea has broken away altogether, and far-reaching concessions towards self-government and political independence have been won in West Africa, Madagascar, and elsewhere in what is left of the so-called "French Union."

Britain and France are the two main colonial powers in Africa. They are not leaving willingly, and bloody battles and repressions are continuing in the French Congo, Nyasaland and elsewhere. But they are at least showing signs of realising that the answer to the demand for freedom is not and cannot be repression alone. They are trying to buy off, or at any rate postpone, the demand for full freedom and independence by various schemes for "partial self-government within the Commonwealth (or French Union)", "limited independence", "reservation of certain powers, and veto rights for the Colonial Office" (or the Governor, or High Commissioner, etc.

BELGIUM AND PORTUGAL

The Government of Belgium has long rested secure and happy in the possession of its vast and rich Colony in the Congo. True, they appointed African "Mayors" in various locations. But these so-called Mayors were only appointed after they had satisfied the Belgian authorities that they were "loyal" supporters of imperialism. What was the surprise of the colonial rulers when one of these "sound elements" returned from Accra and started talking about independence for the Congo! Quickly they locked him up: but the masses streamed out into the streets of the capital in protest. The Belgian Parliament was summoned in an emergency session, and came out with a document promising widespread reforms and concessions to the African people of the Congo.

The Fascist dictatorship of Portugal, alone among the European powers with colonies in Africa, appears to be blind and deaf to the vast changes sweeping this continent. It continues with its regime of cruel repression, exploitation verging on, sometimes actually, slavery, and complete denial of democratic and human rights. The Salazar regime is living in a fool's paradise if it imagines that it is going to last very much longer in undisturbed domination over seven million Africans in Angola and Mozambique.

Finally, we come to the position of the African people in the Union of South Africa. (We may remark in passing that the position is very similar in many respects in Rhodesia). Here the problem is not merely or mainly that of independence from political domination from Britain. The problem of the African people here is to gain freedom from domination by the

organised minority of Whites who have settled down and live in their midst, and who behave towards Africans exactly the same way as the imperialists do in their colonies.

The delegates to the All-African People's Conference recognised that this struggle of the African people in the Union, led by the African National Congress, is part of the general struggle for freedom all over the continent. The resolutions passed can leave no doubt in the mind of any reader as to how matters in the Union are viewed by our neighbours North of the Limpopo. One resolution called for a united front of "the workers, the peasants and other sections of the toiling masses, together with the intellectuals . . . in common action of a final attack on discrimination and racialism.

Another resolution declared that the permanent Secretariat, elected by the Conference, should

"urge any African independent states which conduct trade relations with South Africa to impose economic sanctions against the latter country as a protest against racial discrimination which the European minority are practicing to the humiliation of the Non-European minority. Such sanctions should urge the boycott of South African goods."

Even more significantly, for the great mining interests which dominate this country's economy, and which might hope not to suffer overmuch from a boycott of Union manufactures, the Conference went on to resolve:

"that all African countries which supply South Africa with migrant labour should organise their reservoir of workers for their own use and thus withhold such labour from South African industry, which has become the instrument of oppression."

Finally, and of considerable interest in view of Mr. Eric Louw's continuous evasions on the question of diplomatic relations with African States, the Accra conference resolved:

"That no African state should have any diplomatic relations with any country on our continent that practices race discrimination."

The point does not need to be underlined. The country which practices race discrimination, more than any other in Africa, is the Union. The Nationalist Government, after years of consistent condemnation and criticism by the General Assembly of the United Nations, is not particularly popular in any part of the world. Nowhere is it more unpopular than among our closest neighbours. The concept of freedom cherished by the Accra Conference does not stop short of the Limpopo River — nor at the Zambesi either for that matter.

THE POLICEMAN OF AFRICA

It is not only solidarity with the ten million non-White victims of Apartheid in South Africa that led to so strong a revulsion against South Africa's

ruling caste on the part of our African neighbours. It is true that the Government's theory and practice of white baasskap is a standing insult and outrage to every dark-skinned person in Africa, Asia and America — as the visiting Brazilian footballers found to their indignation the other day. And it is also true that African people throughout this country ardently hope for the day of freedom to dawn for their brothers who are oppressed in the Union.

But there are also other reasons why Africa hates the Union Government and stands united with the struggle of the masses of our people for freedom. Among the most important of these reasons is that the Union Government is a standing threat to freedom in every other part of the continent.

When Welensky wanted military help to suppress the Nyasa people, he appealed in the first instance to the Union Government. And the Union Government replied that it was prepared immediately to furnish such help. Welensky said he appealed to Pretoria and not to London because it was nearer at hand. We do not believe it. We believe he appealed to Pretoria because he felt more sure of a sympathetic reception from Verwoerd and because the time is coming soon — if it has not arrived already — when English lads will refuse to go out into Africa, as they did in Kenya, to shoot down African lads whose only "crime" is that they desire in their own countries the same rights which Englishmen enjoy to govern themselves.

Another fact which has leaked out into the newspapers is that the Union Defence Minister, Erasmus, has made repeated attempts to get the Union established as the headquarters of a so-called "African NATO", a military alliance of the colonial powers with African "possessions" whose purpose will be "to fight Communism."

What sort of "Communism" does he want to fight? It is not difficult to guess. Every time an African people stands up against its colonial masters for liberty it will be called Communism, just as Roy Welensky was prepared to label Nyasaland's opposition to Federation as Communism on the ridiculous basis that a Nyasa delegate was seen talking to a Russian at Accra, and just as Swart and Rademeyer and their jackals and stooges keep labelling the anti-Apartheid movement in the Union as Communism.

Minister Erasmus does not appear to be enjoying much success with his plan. The reason is not far to seek. The imperialists of Europe are not anxious to associate themselves with the Union. They have learnt over the past decade in Asia and the Middle East and North Africa the hard lesson which the Nationalists refuse to learn, that brute force no longer serves to keep an oppressed people in subjection, that concessions and an increasing measure of self-government must be granted if they are to retain any prestige and influence whatever among the peoples over whom for so long they reigned supreme. They now want to appear in the role of benefactors, kind donors of the blessings of independence and democracy.

Association, particularly military association of the type envisaged, with the Union Government would be fatal to any hopes of making a convincing appearance in such a role. This Government is becoming increasingly an embarrassment rather than a help to its friends.

Verwoerd's government threatens to become in this century and in this continent what the Tsarist government was during the revolutionary-democratic upsurge which swept the continent of Europe in the last century. At that time, the history books tell us, Russia was known as "the policeman of Europe." Before committing itself to such a course, however, the Union Government would do well to recall the ultimate fate of the Tsarist regime.

SOUTHERN AFRICA MUST CHANGE

Verwoerd's Union and Welensky's Federation have no place in the Free Africa which is so dramatically and powerfully being shaped by the turbulent and irresistible forces of history. They must change and give way to free democratic states governed by the will of the masses of the people themselves. And, though outside criticism of the white baasskap serves to encourage the freedom fighters of Southern Africa, this great democratic change will be brought about by the hands and the will of the peoples of this sub-continent themselves.

The charge is sometimes made, regretfully by its friends, or exultingly by its enemies, that the liberation movement of this country appears to make but little progress as compared with that of its sister-movements further to the North. They point to the fact that Nkrumah rules in Christianborg castle, Nigeria is on the verge of self-government, even in Basutoland, Congress government seems to be not far off, while in the Union, Congress is a persecuted and hunted movement, its leaders and members treated like outcasts and criminals. And from these facts they draw a false conclusion, that the leaders of the liberation struggle in this country lag behind their colleagues to the North in patriotism, political wisdom and ardent determination to win freedom.

They forget, these sideline critics, that in this country we are faced not merely by a handful, a few thousand, of officials and traders from Europe or Britain, as is the case in the colonies of central and northern Africa, other than Algeria. Freedom in South Africa is opposed by a powerful well-entrenched local ruling class, which has contrived, through extending privileges and by the inculcation from childhood of the crudest forms of racialism, to draw to its support the majority of the permanent white population of three millions, who mistakenly believe that it is in their interests to "keep the Black man down." Freedom here is opposed by vast financial interests, both local and overseas, who have invested millions and made millions out of cheap labour, and who will do everything in their power to see that labour remains cheap.

To win freedom in the face of this bitter and powerful opposition, with all the methods of mass terror, repression and intimidation which it has at its disposal, and which it uses so inhumanly and ruthlessly — this is no easy task. It is, indeed, an extraordinarily difficult, long drawn and complex task, almost without parallel in the world. And in this task, our South African liberation leaders have shown, and continue to show, a measure of determination, skill, vision and courage of which any nation could be proud, which has indeed won the admiration of all the world.

There are even more bitter trials ahead of us.

The Nationalists have modified their language, they go in for fancy talk about "self-government", they talk in public about "the Bantu" and only in private about "the Kaffirs." But behind the fancy talk, their action are even worse than ever. Mass evictions and deportations, passes for women, higher taxes, more political persecution, dearer bread, lower wages, the unseating of African representatives Ballinger, Lee Warden and Stanford: such is the miserable prospect they hold out before the country.

But their days are numbered. The great demonstrations that marked Africa Week in the Union showed that the masses have not been intimidated; every act of persecution has only rallied them more strongly behind Congress than ever before.

Even the ranks of the Nationalist Party have begun to waver; the expulsion of a du Plessis is but a surface manifestation of the revolt that is gathering against the lunatic inflexibility of Doctor Verwoerd.

It is worth bearing in mind that our struggles are as much a spur and inspiration to other parts of the Continent as theirs are to us. Each time we batter against the wall of reaction in South Africa, we are helping to make a breach that will ultimately let the tides of freedom surge over the whole world.

A READER'S COMPLAINT

A reader of LIBERATION has written to complain of our "infuriating" practice of splitting up important articles, such as the recent contributions of Professor Pothekin and Dr. Simons, and keeping readers waiting for two months for the conclusion. We have thought it over, and we agree. That is why we have devoted the bulk of the present issue to Mr. Mandela's devastating exposure of the "Bantu Self-Government" Bill. Alas, that has meant holding over for our next issue stimulating contributions from Mr. Joe Matthews and Mr. Lionel Forman. There's only one solution to the difficulty — a bigger LIBERATION. But that would need more money, which we haven't got. What about helping us, dear readers?