

LIBERATION

A Journal of Democratic Discussion

No. 12

One Shilling

CONTENTS

Editorial	1
How China Solves the National Question	7
The Great Conspiracy (Part II)	11
Thoughts on Literature Among Africans	15
Adventure, 1955	18

Editorial

OUT OF THE DITCH

THE meeting at Geneva between the heads of the Soviet Union and the major capitalist States has been greeted with overwhelming relief all over the world. It is true that no concrete agreement was reached at this meeting, or at that between the U.S.A. and the People's Republic of China which followed it. But that such talks should have been held at all—and they are to be followed by further discussions between the Foreign Ministers in October—is a tremendous victory for the friends of peace throughout the world, who have long been demanding that differences between the nations should be resolved by negotiation instead of the ruinous armaments race, military groupings and threats of unbridled atomic war to which we have become accustomed of late years.

It would be foolish to imagine that the desperate and powerful men in America who plotted and started the Korean war have willingly abandoned their dreams of world conquest. But those dreams have, one by one, proved empty illusions and the ravings of lunacy. They began to crumble when the Yankee "supermen" turned and fled from the Yalu River: they have shattered to nothingness with each new

evidence of Soviet advancement and superiority in the field of science and technology. The blast of the first Soviet hydrogen bomb—technically ahead of America's—was the final explosion which dispelled the illusions of the would-be world conquerors, and awoke them to the realities of a world in which Socialist Russia and People's China have come to stay, and in which peaceful co-existence is the only possible alternative to annihilation.

This awakening to reality was the new factor that made possible the talks at Geneva and that reflected itself in them. It is not the Soviet Union that has changed its policy. A lot of silly chatter has appeared in the newspapers about a new Soviet policy that has arisen since the death of Stalin. No doubt, the policy of the Russian leaders, like that of any other country, must modify itself according to changed circumstances. But, on the fundamental need for the peaceful co-existence of the socialist and capitalist systems, Soviet policy has remained clear and stable since 1917. No man contributed more to the establishment and clarification of that policy than Stalin himself; his last public statement was a powerfully-worded demand for just such a meeting as has now taken place at Geneva.

A NEW PHASE

History is a process, and only a simpleton could expect to see the evil effects of a decade of war hysteria, vicious anti-Soviet lying, and fairy-stories about the "Communist menace," undone overnight. In West Germany, the new **Wehrmacht** is still arming. On the island of Taiwan, the U.S.A. still holds Chiang Kai-shek pointed like a revolver at the heart of China. And imperialist machine-guns still chatter in the forests of Kenya and Malaya, and in the villages of French North Africa. Nevertheless, the tide has turned against war and in favour of the people. Geneva has ended the Big Lie that the Soviet Union wants war, that enormous military preparations are necessary to defend us, that the so-called "free world" must be "mobilised against Communism."

A new phase has opened in world events. The long perilous winter of the "cold war" is drawing to its end, and mankind may at last be entering into a happy springtime of peace and friendship among the nations. We are emerging from the dreadful nightmare of a world engulfed in the flames and destruction of nuclear warfare which has haunted us ever since the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Churchill's infamous Fulton speech ten years ago.

What does this new phase mean to the ordinary people of the world in their bitter struggle for food, land, homes, education, jobs and freedom? What does it mean to the people of South Africa, suffering under the sjambok of apartheid?

We have had occasion before in these columns to point to the inseparable connection between the struggle for world peace and the people's aspirations for freedom and democracy. War and war prepa-

rations are the enemy of the people's living standards and liberties. The arms that were made and the men who were conscripted in Britain, under the pretext of preparing for an allegedly imminent attack from the "Reds," have in fact been used in drawn-out and bloody attempts to crush the people of Malaya and Kenya. In America and other countries, including our own, delirious ravings by Government spokesmen and police officers about fabulous "Communist plots" have been the pretext for an all-out onslaught against the labour and democratic movement, and the institution of a police regime in which the spy, the telephone-tapper, the black-lister and the informer reign supreme.

This hateful machinery is not going to disappear like frost on the highveld in a few hours sunshine. In fact, without the most determined and protracted struggle by the forces of democracy, mobilising all their forces in united endeavour, it is not going to disappear at all. But the new phase in international relationships creates a new climate favourable to that struggle. It opens up a fresh way forward for the advancement of the common people of the world in their eternal march to wider freedoms and higher standards of life and culture.

Already, even in the United States, reaction has begun its first steps of retreat. The noble-hearted Negro artist, Paul Robeson, long denied his right to travel and sing abroad, by the fascist McCarthyism that held America in its grip, has at last been granted a passport, though only for Canada. The unspeakable McCarthy himself languishes in obscurity and disgrace. American democrats still sit in jails for the crime of expressing opinions unpopular with big business, and no change in policy can restore the martyred Rosenberg couple to life, but the tide is changing. The American people will surely return to the broad road of progress their forefathers began in 1776, and recoil with shame and loathing from the foetid swamp of Hitlerism in which they have wallowed these past ten years.

Another potent sign of new times was the conference that preceded Geneva, the meeting of African and Asian countries held at Bandoeng in Indonesia. Headed by Nehru and Chou En-Lai, the delegates at Bandoeng represented widely different political and economic outlooks. That they overcame these differences in their common opposition to war and colonialism, and left the meeting better friends than when they came, is a factor whose significance for the future it would be difficult to overestimate.

No word of welcome for the favourable trend towards world peace signified by the Geneva and Bandoeng meetings has been heard from Mr. Strijdom or any of his lieutenants. Not Mr. Strijdom, but Mr. Kotane and Maulvi Cachalia spoke for South Africa at Bandoeng. Preoccupied with their wretched problem of "keeping the native in his place," the Nationalists seem hardly to have noticed that the world is not as it was yesterday. Olive Schreiner once wrote that "you cannot keep a man down in a ditch without staying down there with him," and our rulers seem far more concerned with keeping non-white people out of their buses and polling booths than with the fact that humanity

has, for a while at any rate, been reprieved from its death sentence by frying or poisonous radiation.

For all that, South Africa cannot remain untouched by the currents of democracy and freedom now flowing so strongly about our globe. Try as it will, the Government cannot hope to erect a corrugated-iron curtain between our country and the rest of the world, nor can they for long hope to prevent the non-white people of South Africa from joining their brothers and sisters of all countries in the trek to progress.

Despite every obstacle of terror and intimidation, the pall of Bantu Education, the mass evictions from Johannesburg's Western Areas, the bannings and deportations of their leaders and the packing of Court and Senate, the people of South Africa have never been so united and determined to win their freedom.

And despite the rising frenzy of Strijdom, Swart, Verwoerd, Rademeyer and Co., their prospects of victory have never been brighter.

A PROGRAMME FOR THE PEOPLE

The daily newspapers attached small significance to the meeting at Kliptown which, on June 26, 1955, completed its two days of discussion and adopted the Freedom Charter. But we believe that the text books of the future will treat it as one of the most important landmarks in our history.

The Congress of the People was not only important because, in present South African conditions, it represented a triumph of determination, enthusiasm and good organisation against every means, short of an outright ban, which the State could bring to bear on it. Nor because it was the most representative gathering of men and women of all races, from all corners of the country, that has ever taken place. The Congress was above all important because of the heritage it has given the people of South Africa—the Freedom Charter, compounded of innumerable demands, written and verbal, sent in from town and country, farm and factory and prison, from schools and churches, from homes and street corners.

The Charter has, for the first time, given the democratic movement a clearly-defined common purpose and direction. Often enough have we spoken and written of "freedom"—though, perhaps, each of us may have had a different concept of what we mean. Now there is no room any more for such differences. For the Charter provides us with a precisely phrased, clear-cut conception of what the **people**—not just this or that individual—mean by Freedom. The Freedom Charter is more than a list of demands. It is the voice of South Africa claiming its own. It is the plan for the builders of new South Africa. It is the People's Programme of Action.

To the Nationalists and their open and concealed supporters, the Freedom Charter is the trumpet of doom. To the Liberals, the "Federals," the Covenanters, the Friedmannites and all who seek to walk the

shaky tightrope between the contending armies of freedom and oppression, it is an inescapable challenge. You, ladies and gentlemen, claim to be for liberty. Here it is! Are you for it or against it? Will you fight for the Freedom Charter?

For the millions of oppressed Non-Europeans and the thousands of European democrats who reject the false god of "baasskap," the Freedom Charter is a banner, an inspiration, a marching-song that voices their deepest longings, their inmost aspirations.

"South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." Thus opens the Freedom Charter. A challenging idea, this!

We know of the familiar theory of the Afrikaner nationalists: that this country is the God-given property of the descendants of Van Riebeeck's party of settlers and of the Voortrekkers who conquered it, who still think and behave like an army of occupation. Familiar, too, is the far-from-dead conception that the Union "belongs" (also by right of conquest) to Britain—as personified by the lady whose head adorns our coinage. And, though less is heard of it, we have no doubt that a number of important gentlemen holding large blocks of shares in gold and uranium mines, owning thousands of morgen of wheatlands and mielielands and vineyards and orchards and cattle ranches and sheep farms, disposing of millions of pounds worth of city properties, directing vast banking and financial institutions—we have no doubt that such gentlemen are of the opinion, backed up by title-deeds and legal rights, that South Africa belongs to **them**.

A daring new doctrine it is then, that says that our beautiful country, from the Limpopo down to Cape Point, the lush meadowlands of Zululand and Natal; the wide sunny expanses of the highveld and the Free State and the Karroo; the goldfields and the diamond fields, the great cities erected by the hands of the workers who live in them—that all of this our South Africa belongs, by right, not to the self-appointed master-race, nor to the Queen, nor to the money-bags: but to all of us who live here, who have watered the soil with our sweat; "we, the people of South Africa."

And so the Charter goes on, point by point, to fill in the picture, to claim for the people their rights to land and peace and liberty, to vote and to govern, to work and to learn, to live free from raids and arbitrary arrests and insults to their colour and language, in dignity and decency and security.

A noble Charter, this! A worthy cause to strive for, unto the end.

DOWN TO WORK!

Can the Charter be won? Can it be changed from words on paper to living reality?

The answer depends on the people of our country and in the first place on their democratic labour and liberation organisations.

To the men and women of the African National Congress and its allies in the Congress movement, whose devoted work made the great Congress of the People possible, we say, "Now is the time to work as never before." Bring home the meaning of the Charter to every man, woman and child. Take up every problem that faces the people wherever they are, however small, and relate it to the Charter. Here, in this Charter, you have the means to increase manifold the membership and influence of Congress.

Let the Congress movement clear the decks for action! The tasks of winning the Charter place challenging responsibilities of leadership before us. There will be no room in the future for the sort of blunders—remoteness from the rank-and-file, vacillation from adventurism to despair, lack of flexibility—that have characterised some recent campaigns. Let us get down to sound organisation, education, efficiency and aliveness to local issues at branch level! Let us prune our organisations of the windbags and would-be dictators!

What about the millions of peasants and farm labourers in the countryside? The Congress of the People revealed weaknesses on this vital sector! It will be for us to overcome these weaknesses, to organise the rural folk in peasant organisations, if we want to win the Charter!

What about the trade union movement? The S.A. Congress of Trade Unions has struck a blow for true trade union principle, but yet it lags organisationally behind the rising militancy of the workers. And without the workers marching at the head, the Charter cannot be won!

And let us not forget that more and more Europeans are impatiently seeking forms of expression of their hostility to the Government, outside the frustrating inaction and futility of the official Parliamentary opposition Parties. Here is a chance for the Congress of Democrats to come forward and win them for the Charter, boldly and in its own right. But it is a formidable task, demanding unconditional energy and efficiency: a ruthless break with sectarianism.

Here is a formidable task for all of us. We shall meet with opposition not only from the ruthless fascists above, but also from the faint-hearts, the unstable romantics who imagine that victory can come in a day, and despair the day after; the careerists and opportunists in our own midst.

But we have two mighty forces on our side: the people, and history. We have a noble cause, and splendid comrades by our side. We shall win.

Let us get down to work!