

SWORD OF DAMOCLES OVER SOUTH AFRICA

By WALTER M. B. NHLAPO

PUBLIC opinion in this country has been rudely shocked by the unwarrantable and dastardly attacks which have been launched by this Government. They have labelled all criticism and opposition as agitation and communistic. These accusations are for no other reason than the fact that the masses take certain decisions and critical oppositions which in their honest and democratic conviction are in the best interest of the country.

The Government attacks in the form of laws and raids have catapulted to a point of pike-staff clarity the dangers which hang like the sword of Damocles over this country.

Most people for fear of the Government have become like dumb cattle in the bivouac of life, and this in spite of the fact that they realise that the liberty of man to express himself in accordance with the dictates of his conscience is now dangerously threatened. There is now as never before an overt attempt to stifle freedom of talk, movement, criticism and opposition which is the inalienable right enjoyed in civilised and democratic countries.

These threats to the expression of one's conscience and to the freedom of opposition when undemocratic and repressive issues present themselves are only a foretaste of sadder things in store.

We are fully aware of the fact that any person who takes an independent and opposite line from the Government has his integrity besmeared and is liable to be banned or deported, for opposition means sedition and treason. One is guilty to think objectively and independently. But looking through the trickery of raids, banishments, deportations one realises the folly and vanity of the Government and that opposition of democrats are vital issues affecting the destiny of their oppressive rule.

“The wave that breaks against a forward stroke
Beats not the swimmer back, but thrills him through
With joyous trust to win his way anew
Through stronger seas than first upon him broke
And triumphed . . .

—Algernon Charles Swinburne.