

LIBERATION

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Editorial

WHICH WAY ARE WE GOING ?

“Let them call the Freedom Charter ‘treason’ and ‘sedition’ if they want to. For us it embodies all our dearest aims and aspirations of the kind of South Africa we wish to live in and our children to grow up in.”

Mr. E. P. Moretsele, Presidential address at the Transvaal A.N.C. Conference.

AS we write, at the beginning of October, no one has yet made an accurate assessment of the number of people whose homes and offices were raided by the special branch of the police all over the country in the fantastic search for “treason and sedition” that took place on September 25. The victims ranged from Father Huddleston, in his Rosettenville Priory, to local Congress organisers at Grahamstown, Bloemfontein and Ermelo. They carted away enormous quantities of pamphlets, books, personal letters, copies of the *Freedom Charter*, of *New Age*, *Fighting Talk*, *Liberation*. Some bright sparks even confiscated a Chinese dressing gown, embroidered with calligraphy, and carried it triumphantly to police headquarters. Probably five hundred people were searched—some had to submit to a search of their persons—and no doubt well over a thousand policemen took part in the operation.

The statement issued jointly by the Congress movement correctly described the raids as “acts of intimidation.” The talk of “sedition” and “treason,” of “black uprisings” and “Communist bogeys” is, in fact,

a propaganda trap, designed to cover up the real danger to the country—the sinister conspiracy of the Nationalists and the Broederbond to set up a Fascist republic.

In fact, for those who have eyes to see, the raids exposed with the sharpest clarity the nature of the basic conflict in South Africa. The raids themselves were an obvious recognition by the Government that its real opponent is not the collection of not very determined or formidable gentlemen whom it faces as the “official opposition” in the Assembly, but the very serious and determined millions of people outside the House, whose leaders are the victims of the special branch.

Hell-bent for their Fascist republic, the Nationalists recognise that the only determined and serious opposition to their plans is to be found in those organisations which have repeatedly been the victims of their vindictive raids, bans, deportations and persecutions, the targets of their wild allegations of treason and sedition.

The democratic movement of the African National Congress and its allies is the target of the Nationalists, precisely because they recognise that only this movement has any genuine alternative programme to their own for the future of the country. Let us briefly examine these alternatives.

BROEDERBOND DESPOTISM OR FREEDOM CHARTER?

The South Africa planned for us by Strijdom, Verwoerd, Swart and the Broederbond is a nightmare of repression, regimentation and colour-mania. South Africa criss-crossed by the barbed wire that lozenges its group areas, the white “master race” no less imprisoned than its prisoners by the fences which it has built; no less terrorised than they, as the flames of resentment it has called forth mount higher and higher. . . . There is the Nationalists’ picture of our country tomorrow, painted against the lowering background of hatred, violence, fear and poverty; a picture drawn from a mentality fundamentally diseased, infected by the foul germs of Hitlerism, profoundly degrading to the spirit of man in its glorious variety and its infinite possibilities.

Against this macabre nightmare—the graveyard fantasy of a vanishing depotism—can only be placed the young, fresh vision of the future called forth by the democratic movement of the oppressed people of our country—the Freedom Charter. Here, inspired by a humanism that is universal, yet as South African as the springbok or the assegai, is a very different plan for tomorrow’s South Africa. A picture that answers the deepest needs of all our people for higher material and cultural standards, for freedom, equality and brotherhood.

Freedom Charter, or Broederbond despotism? Here, fundamentally, is the question that faces our country, and that will continue to face it with ever-increasing sharpness, in the months and the years to come. Hence Canute-Swart’s anti-Congress raids. Hence Canute-Verwoerd’s frenzied attempts to capture the minds of young Africa in his anti-Congress schools. Hence, too, the futility and irrelevance of the United

Party, the Liberal Party and all the other unstable groupings which seek so desperately for some neutral area between the embattled armies of Freedom and Slavery.

NO NEUTRAL AREA

There is no neutral area. The United Party and its newspapers can do nothing better about the police raids than to whine that Mr. Swart ought to take the country into his confidence about the treason plot—when all the world knows that there is as much reality in it as in the poisoned wells of 1950. Dr. Friedmann came in like a lion and went out like a lamb, bleating about the need for a return to the alleged principles of the U.P.—when he has sat solemnly in Parliament since 1948 witnessing, and participating in, the most abject and naked stripping of its pretences to principle that can ever have befallen a political party. The Women's League for the Defence of the Constitution has earned much praise for its courage, and its obvious moral superiority to the Nat. rabble. But what is it that, so courageously, they defend? The South African Constitution, that rotten leaky compromise of 1910 that let the minority Nat. Government seize power and paved the way to the police state. And, as for the Liberals, we have yet to hear that they protested against, or even noticed, the September raids.

All of these groups will, sooner or later, be forced to abandon the role which they have cast themselves, wishfully, for—the role of spectators in the real struggle for the future of our country that is going on before our eyes: now cheering a good move, now booing a foul. (Is there not something symbolic in the silence and passivity of the black-sashed women, appealing vainly to a sense of shame and fairplay that does not exist?) Here is a game in which, in the end, there are no spectators, and those who do not actively enter on the side of freedom will be conscripted against it by the tyranny.

Despite all their show of force and viciousness, the Nationalists are on the losing side. Their dark vision of the future cannot prevail, for the human spirit strives ever upwards to greater freedom, and they cannot hope to stand against the tide of history running so strongly in our times.

The movement for national liberation in South Africa will prevail. It is the heir to the future of our country. And it is precisely because it has this high destiny before it that it needs, to-day, the greatest clarity of mind and of purpose; the sooner to bring the struggle to its victorious conclusion and to enter upon its heritage, and the more soundly and beautifully to build the free South Africa of the morrow.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY

This magazine is devoted specifically to giving what assistance it can in this vitally important search for clarity. Where are we going, and how do we get there? The answer to these questions is the key to our rapid and successful advancement.

Democratic South Africa has recently acquired a valuable treasure in defining its objectives: the Freedom Charter, which Mr. Moretsele so properly described as embodying "the dearest aims and aspirations" of the oppressed people. The Charter is the rock upon which we must build. But a tremendous amount still remains to be done in discussing and deciding upon a thousand problems which still beset all who work for the implementation of the Charter. In such discussions it would be very wrong to ignore the world background against which our own struggles take place, or the essential need to learn from similar struggles in other places and other times. We disagree strongly with the criticism expressed by one reader, who apparently resents *Liberation* dealing with any problems beyond our borders.

Yet, it is true that our first preoccupation must remain with our own country, its present and its past as well. For there can be no proper understanding of what we face to-day if we ignore the roots of to-day's happenings in the history of our country. The true history of South Africa has yet to be written, and what is palmed off on innocent schoolchildren to-day as "history" is largely a tissue of propagandist distortions, compiled in the interests of "white supremacy".

It is therefore a duty and a privilege for us to devote a large proportion of the present issue to Mr. Jaspán's important article. For Mr. Jaspán, we believe, has not only carried out a splendid work of research, he has also laid an incalculably valuable basis for what will be a whole school of future historians, basing their labours not upon the facile and superficial assumptions of the orthodox school stemming from Theal, but upon a real investigation of the past of all the peoples of our country.

Liberation would welcome comments from interested and qualified readers on Mr. Jaspán's conclusions, as for that matter we do in respect of all articles in these columns. The magazine is there for you to use; in using it you will help others who have, perhaps, the same problems as yourself.

At the same time, we also appeal to our readers to help the magazine in other ways as well. We need more agents, subscribers, donors. By helping *Liberation* you are helping to light up the road ahead.

PROBLEMS OF ORGANISATION IN THE A.N.C.

By BANNED LEADER

THE African National Congress is a national liberatory movement at present confined to the African people. It has an outstanding record of struggles. In recent years it has become the accepted leader of the South African people, and the alternative to the herrenvolk Nationalist Government.