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PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

‘What is the future of the Protectorates under the British Government? . . . South Africa cannot tolerate the creation of free and independent Native states on its borders . . . South Africa’s patience is being exhausted.’

Dr. D. F. Malan. House of Assembly, August 11, 1953.

Congress declares that the policy of race discrimination pursued by the South African Government constitutes a breach of the Union’s obligations under the U.N. Charter, and a threat to world peace.”

—Resolution of the South African Peace Congress,
August 23, 1953.

AS recently as six months ago, the opinion that a third global war was imminent and inevitable was freely being expressed at all levels in South Africa and other countries of the capitalist world. The great powers seemed irreconcilably separated into two armed camps. It appeared that the fighting in Korea would drag on endlessly, with the continual menace of some MacArthurite General using it as a spark to ignite the world. Every Soviet approach towards an overall negotiation of differences among the big powers was derided as another “peace offensive” and summarily rejected. The confidence and persistence of the members of the peace movement in their campaigns for a “Big Five” peace pact rallied and inspired thousands to fight against war, but many, we fear, even among their admirers and supporters, had begun to feel that their task was hopeless, that the cold-war line-up had hardened into a permanent mould.

But the past six months has seen far-reaching changes in international affairs. The renewed, vigorous Soviet peace initiative that began in March has made a decisive impact on public opinion in all countries. It came at a time when the burdens of armaments and war preparations were becoming intolerable. At last, the overwhelming desire of the peoples for peace broke through, compelling their statesmen to take heed, and exposing overnight the unstable character of the aggressive European war alliance America has laboured for the past eight years to build.

In May came Churchill’s dramatic call for big-power discussions “on the highest level,” and “without long delay.” The response of public opinion in all countries, including the United States, was immediate, enthusiastic. To Dulles’ astonishment and anger,

America's tame "allies" began speaking up like men, demanding acceptance of the latest North Korean proposals for agreement on war prisoners and a cease fire. The prophets of doom were confounded; the correctness of the line of the peace movement strikingly confirmed. A mighty wave of hope surged through the world, that this was the end of the nerve-racking, ruinous period of "cold war"; the beginning of a bright era of peace and prosperity.

Counter Offensive

The same events that filled the people with hope, filled those who had gambled their future on continued war-preparations with fear and dismay. The fascists and arms racketeers who today dictate the policy of the United States know that their power and influence cannot survive the ending of war hysteria. America's gauleiters abroad—Rhee, Chiang, Adenauer—fear talk of a peace settlement as the devil is said to fear holy water. The end of the cold war means the end of them, and they know it. The entire resources of this desperate gang of international pyromaniacs were thrown into an all-out counter offensive, to halt the "threat" of peace and stoke up anew the fires of war.

To some extent, they succeeded.

Churchill's call for talks with Russia was side-tracked by Eisenhower's proposal for a "preparatory" conference at Bermuda, without Russia—indeed, it may be said, against Russia. And when Churchill's illness put even the proposed Bermuda conference into cold storage, the West European Foreign Ministers were summoned to Washington and lined up to issue yet another of the futile, routine ultimatums to the Soviet Union, proposing a meeting of Foreign Ministers about the German question, on terms known in advance to be unacceptable. In Korea, Syngman Rhee, deliberately and with American connivance, set himself to sabotage the agreement on war prisoners and hence, he hoped, on the cease-fire.

In Berlin and Eastern Europe the Americans gave the signal for what they fondly hoped would be a tremendous civil war, involving the Soviet Union itself, and putting an end to all talk of negotiations. Millions of dollars had been spent on building up an elaborate machinery of espionage, sabotage and subversion in Europe. No doubt, in order to justify their receipt of these dollars, America's agents had built up an encouraging picture of crumbling governments, starving masses on the verge of revolt, warring factions and internal chaos—a picture which their employers would be only too eager to accept as the truth. That picture turned out to be utterly false. The "revolution" turned out to be a damp squib. Yet, inflated by propaganda out of all resemblance to the facts, the reports of "trouble behind the iron curtain" played their part in delaying and sabotaging peace negotiations, and keeping America's satellites at heel.

The Turn of the Tide

But the tide is running against the war party. Their "successes" were temporary and illusory. Ignoring Syngman Rhee's provocation, the North Koreans and Chinese returned to the conference table at Pan Mun Jon, this time to negotiate an agreement and sign a cease-fire. The net practical outcome of the adventures in Germany and Eastern Europe is that the Americans have exposed their principal agents, weaknesses have been discovered in time and set to rights, dangerous elements of the Beria type removed, and the stability and internal prestige of the Governments substantially reinforced.

The tide is running towards peace. The people are turning their backs on war. That is the meaning of the great strikes that have swept France—basically, strikes against the Government's war and colonial policy and the intolerable burden of armaments borne on the backs of the workers. That is the meaning of the fall of Washington's man in Italy, de Gasperi. For the first time since Ernest Bevin sacrificed British independence for "Marshall Aid," we have seen Britain openly challenging American leadership at the U.N. General Assembly on a major issue: not just whether the Soviet Union and India should be seated at the Korea conference, but fundamentally whether Rhee and Dulles should be allowed to get away again with the manoeuvre of June, 1950, and plunge the Far East—perhaps the whole world—into war. The aggressive and infinitely perilous character of American foreign policy has never before been so universally understood and condemned. Indeed, even the columns of the capitalist newspapers, which have hitherto regarded this matter as strictly taboo, have at last, cautiously, begun to reflect what informed opinion has long understood.

On August 27, "The Star" featured, in the most prominent position on the front page, an article by its Special Correspondent in London, criticising the American Government for its "appeasement of Syngman Rhee.

"It is an undisputable and publicly established fact that South Korea wants war . . . Dr. Rhee's aim is the unification of all Korea under his authority, and . . . this aim cannot be realised by a limited war but only by an unlimited war against China which in turn would be likely to lead to a world war.

"All this is clear cut and simple. What is . . . highly mysterious and difficult to understand is the American attitude. Two explanations are possible. **One would be that America herself had decided on war;** the other that America, fearing war, and seeing Dr. Rhee bent on it, sees no other way of controlling him than appeasing him." (Our emphasis.)

What is highly mysterious and difficult to understand is the meaning of the second "explanation" quoted. And what is clear cut and simple is the fact that Syngman Rhee does not and cannot open his mouth without prompting from Washington. Yet, after over seven years of servile adulation of American policy by the "Star" and the rest of the daily press, in which every State Department propaganda handout about the "free world" was reverently presented as

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a latter-day gospel, we are not so much disappointed to find the "Star" presenting only half the truth as we are delighted to find it presenting any truth at all. It is as though a little fresh air were admitted to a stuffy, smoke-filled room.

Beware of Illusions

Two illusions should be avoided.

The first is that the rulers of the British Empire have suddenly been transformed into doves of peace. Far from it. The cruel war on the villages continues in Malaya; new reinforcements have been despatched to participate in the Kenya man-hunt; and as we write fresh news comes of the opening of a new chapter of imperialist violence to force the Federation plan upon the unwilling Africans of Nyasaland. Britain's rulers have not renounced war; but they **have** awakened to the harsh reality that American global war strategy and plans spell ruination to them—and also, that under cover of the loud-mouthed slogans of "containing Communism," American agencies are quietly and steadily sapping British interests in every corner of the world. A vivid illustration is the neat double-cross which the Americans have just put across their "allies" in Iran.

The second illusion is to imagine that the megalomaniacs who plotted the "cold war" will now capitulate to the massive demand for negotiations. On the contrary, faced with the bankruptcy and the impending collapse of the whole "N.A.T.O.," "E.D.C.," "Middle East Alliance" edifice they have so painfully erected, we must expect further desperate and dangerous manoeuvres from them.

When Mr. Malenkov made his dramatic announcement about the Soviet hydrogen bomb, the official American reaction was not, at last, to accept the Russian proposals, reiterated since 1946, for the prohibition of atomic weapons under international supervision and control. Instead we had the same alarmist talk about "stepping up defence expenditure," yet higher taxation, yet further measures to transfer the American economy on to a full war basis.

But to millions in America and throughout the world it is becoming daily clearer and more obvious that this line of policy is a counsel of doom, that braggadocio and competition in developing yet more terrible engines of destruction can have only one ending. For the sake of human survival, another path must be found. The path of peaceful settlement, disarmament, international trade and co-operation.

Within Our Grasp

Never were the opportunities greater for the world peace movement to make a decisive impact on world history. Never was the need more urgent and crucial. In truth, as the convening call for the first South African Peace Congress announced, "Peace is within Our Grasp."

Against this world background, the Congress was a notable landmark in the development of the peace movement in this country, uniting the pioneer groups of the Transvaal, the Cape and Natal, in the new South African Peace Council; bringing together for the first time delegates from the national executives of the African and Indian Congresses, the S.A. Labour Party, and a representative cross-section of progressive trade unions and people's organisations, from different parts and different nationalities of the country, in the sacred cause of peace.

The Congress did more than to lay firm organisational foundations for the rapid expansion of the peace movement which is now so pressingly demanded. It also laid down in its resolutions the broad, main principles of policy which are essential for the growth of the movement in the particular circumstances of South Africa. Prior to the Congress, much time had been expended in controverting the views of a small group of sectarians, who harboured the view that the movement should be restricted to a narrow circle of "active peace workers", in isolation from the main body of organised progressive forces. The Congress decisively rejected such views. The constitution of the new national Peace Council provides for the association of democratic mass organisations standing together with it against war. The Congress recognised, too, that mass support can only be won on the larger issues of world peace when these are shown to be related to the problems uppermost in the people's minds: the problems of Africa and of our Government's policy.

Adopted by an overwhelming majority, the resolutions of the Congress provide a clear statement of policy which will rally the unconditional support of all who honestly seek to work for peace.

Malanism a Threat to Peace

Added point and emphasis is given to these resolutions by a review of the speech on external policy made by the Prime Minister earlier in August. Dr. Malan, it is true, made formal gestures in support of the decision of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in June, when, according to the communiqué, they "reviewed the state of relations with the Soviet Union and agreed that no opportunity should be lost of composing, or at least easing, the differences which at present divide the world." He acknowledged the right of any people to choose their own form of government—even a Communist government—provided, of course, as he made clear in the same speech, that the term "people" is defined like "employees" in the Industrial Conciliation Act—to exclude Africans, inside or outside the Union.

The essential content of Dr. Malan's speech, however, bears out in detail the charges made by the Peace Congress, and by the African and Indian Congresses in their memorandum to the United Nations Commission on South Africa, that his Government's policy is a threat

to peace. His militant "Africa Charter" is a declaration of war on the aspirations of the millions of people of this continent. His crude and insulting attacks on the Governments of India and the Gold Coast will hardly serve the purpose of "composing and easing differences." And his remarks about the Protectorates, quoted at the head of this article, are irresistibly reminiscent of that notorious speech on the Czech Sudetenland made by another dictatorial leader some fifteen years ago.

This aggressive foreign policy is the reverse side of the autocratic home policy of the Government. It cannot tolerate democratic liberties at home; nor in the Protectorates or up North. It is accustomed to insult non-whites here; we are not surprised at the unbecoming tone it adopts towards the "Kaffir" Nkrumah or the "Coolie" Nehru.

To the Government, the movement for peace seems as "dangerous" as the democratic and trade union movements. Within the same week Mr. Swart causes proscribing letters to be delivered to Abram Fischer, expelling him from the Peace Council, and to Arnold Selby, expelling him from his trade union. Within a fortnight of the first National Peace Congress, five of its most prominent figures are banned: Hilda Watts, Dan Tloome, Cecil Williams, Nelson Mandela and Alan Lipman.

By the same token, all who struggle against this Government for a democratic South Africa are, in their own way, striking a blow against war. A sign of the maturity and development of the national liberation and labour movements in our country is precisely their growing awareness of the importance of the struggle for a negotiated settlement of international differences.

By giving organised and vocal expression to this consciousness, the new South African Peace Council will be able to add fresh reinforcements to the world peace movement at a critical, indeed decisive, period.

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Having invited the Liberal Party to submit a reply to Mr. Mandela's article which appeared in our June issue, we felt under some obligation to publish Professor T. W. Price's article, which appears on another page. Readers will judge for themselves the merits of such arguments as he advances. We must, however, dissociate ourselves from his method of substituting personal innuendo for reasoned debate, and in particular from the imputation contained in his final sentence, for which we wish to state there is no basis either in the article or in the political activity of Mr. Mandela, who is a well-known leader of the African National Congress. A paragraph, irrelevant we consider to the body of the article, has been omitted. This consisted of a series of sweeping and highly contentious assertions about an organisation which is no longer in existence. As any reply or defence by any contributor who disagreed could not legally be printed, we considered it incompatible with our function as a journal of democratic discussion to publish it.