

war is thawing out, and cultural contacts are multiplying between peoples of diverse social and economic systems. In vain the petty tyrants seek to raise and buttress the dykes of censorship and travel restrictions; to keep out the seas of liberating ideas. The tides are running higher and higher. They can no more keep them out than they can keep down the Non-European peoples, insistently battering at the doors of economic advancement and culture; the doors of the universities, the libraries, the theatres and the concert halls.

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# ORGANISE TO DEFEAT "GROUP AREAS"

By WALLACE MLINGESI

"GROUP Areas" is a new catchword for an old and accepted South African policy. The policy dates to the 1913 Land Act, and its fundamental purpose remains unchanged, despite changes of government and great economic developments in our country.

Its purpose is simply the dispossession of peasants from their land by law, to drive them to work as labourers for the farmers, or to seek employment on the mines; in other words, the creation of a landless, unskilled, labour force, compelled to sell their only possession—their ability to work—on the labour market.

This policy, followed in other countries during their industrial revolutions, is further complicated by the fundamental policy of White Supremacy, and the cheap labour system, which makes it necessary for the standards of Non-Europeans to be kept at the lowest possible level. The most effective method of enforcing the policy has always been the gradual taking away from African and other non-white groups of their land rights, and driving them into water-tight compartments, so creating these reservoirs of cheap labour. The Union racial segregation policy is based on this system, and has been in practice since the eighteenth century. The Group Areas Act is part of this whole pattern, and is the culmination of the Indian land restrictions from 1885 onwards.

Group Areas, however, while following the same policy-pattern, has special features of its own which make it different from past legislation. In the past, the poorest were dispossessed. It was an "easy steal." Peasants became farm-labourers and workers. Those were robbed who had least, and there was little outcry. But today, Group Areas is scraping the bottom of the bucket to answer the insatiable demand for cheap,

dispossessed labour, and its purpose is to drive into destitution and to impoverish the middle classes—particularly among the Indians—the shopkeepers and small businessmen. It will bring about the economic strangulation of the Non-Europeans; segregate the Coloured people; help force more Africans into the reserves; and in particular make life intolerable for the Indian people.

At the same time, it serves a second purpose—that of winning the support of a section of the white people by handing them the property and businesses stolen from the non-whites. As we know, Hitler followed this policy with great success in Germany, first literally stealing the thriving businesses and shops of German Jews, and giving them as rewards to his Nazi supporters, then later casting greedy eyes on the estates and industries belonging to the middle and upper classes of Czechoslovakia, Poland—and the whole of Europe. What a wonderful way to become rich without working for a penny! But it was open, unashamed robbery; simply taking by force what rightfully belonged to others and was the fruits of their work; a brutal, hateful policy that angered people in every country throughout the world.

And a policy identical to our Group Areas Act, as it is being applied to the Indian people of South Africa.

Let those who speak of a compromise and negotiations with the Nationalists be clear of the principal object of the Government. At best the compromisers can serve only as an information bureau, and get nothing for it; hence the failure of the policy of the Indian Organisation. Their meeting with Mr. Strijdom brought no results, since the Government rebuked them by declaring Pageview a European area. In spite of their efforts to convince the Government that they were prepared to co-operate, and their desire for Pageview as part of the price, the Nationalists were unmoved. Why should they care—they can get what they want without the Indian Organisation. They will use them if it suits them. Hitler, too, used committees and bodies of collaborators, both among the Jews and later among the upper classes of conquered countries. When there was no longer anything to be obtained from their services, they followed their compatriots into the gas vans and concentration camps. Perhaps the logic of events will convince these local collaborators of the correctness of the Congress policy. And the Congress movement, instead of being arrogant, will heartily welcome them. For this situation calls for unity, not only between the S.A.I.C. and the S.A.I.O., but of the entire Indian community, since all face a common enemy and a common fate.

It is an issue affecting all groups, not only property owners, but also business and professional men, and workers. The shameless decision to uproot the Non-Europeans from their homes in the Western suburbs of Johannesburg, involving more than 100,000 Africans, Coloureds and Indians, will serve as a signal for the greatest campaign of the Group Areas struggle.

We hope it will facilitate the co-ordination of the Congress movement, and eliminate the tendency of regarding a fight against the Group Areas as an affair concerning only the S.A. Indian Congress. It will

also show how mistaken are those people who are susceptible to the propaganda of the Nationalists that Group Areas only affects Indians.

The plan in this campaign will be based on the recent decisions at the All-In Conferences held in Durban and Johannesburg by the Indian Congress: the plan to build a broad, united front, not only among Non-Europeans, but among all those who oppose the inhuman measures of the Group Areas Act.

And it is interesting to see what a wide section of public opinion has been aroused by the latest measures. The robbery of thriving Indian businesses in Pageview, and the utter disregard for human standards, has turned even the hardened stomachs of members of the United Party. Without reservations, joint action against these measures should be built on the broadest possible basis.

In terms of the resolution of the Transvaal Conference, a council of Action is established to mobilise the people to defend their homes, and to organise a day of hartal and mass prayers. A memorandum is also to be prepared together with other national organisations: "to seek the support of the Afro-Asian powers in influencing the member states of the United Nations to take necessary steps to compel the Union Government to cease violating the provisions of the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

**We, however, attach greater importance to the decision for mass struggle, while not minimising the importance of international forces.** The immediate task of the Council of Action must of necessity be the establishment of the vigilance committee, as visualised in the resolution of the anti-pass campaign recently taken by the joint executives of the Congresses, and at the Conference of the Federation of S.A. Women. The importance of the struggle on three fronts—i.e., the Group Areas, Anti-Pass and Trade Union, cannot be over-emphasised.

In a country such as South Africa, it is not easy to have one specific issue to which all others are subordinated, because of the racial set-up and different laws operating. The issue brought about by the operation of the Group Areas Act, however, brings all together under one banner, and also helps us put forward more forcefully the principles of the Freedom Charter.

Group Areas may yet prove the issue which will unite **all** opposition to the Nationalists in a mighty campaign to defeat injustice and open the road to a democratic South Africa.