

The first two articles in this series appeared
contribute to

South Africa

By REV. D. C. THOMPSON

The Reverend Douglas Chadwick Thompson, at present Methodist Minister at Springs, is well-known to progressives in South Africa. Like his fellow-contributors to this series this month, he is one of the accused in the Treason Trial.

1. What Political Changes Do You Consider Desirable In South Africa?

The Political changes which are desirable in South Africa are those which must eventually reflect the true nature of our multi-racial society comprising all the racial groups in the Political union. This means that the attempt of the white dominant minority to hold power at all costs, whether political, economic or military must give way to inter-racial co-operation. The aim of political policy should be to secure the full development of all races to the fullest extent of their ability in the economic, cultural, and social spheres in a truly democratic society.

The effort to maintain the industrial colour bar and to limit the Africans to unskilled work in what is called "White areas" is unrealistic, and does not conform to existing conditions, which show that nearly two-thirds of the African population live and work in the "White areas".

This means that White workers in South Africa who have in the past been unfair and still are unfair and unreasonable in their attitudes towards African advancement must change not only in fairness to the Africans but in the economic interests of the whole population.

White South Africa has begun to reach a point where it cannot ignore the cumulative consequences of past policies, and try as they will the Whites of both major parties cannot avoid the entry of the colour question into their own political battles. The whites are bitterly divided, and therefore cannot refrain from the sharpest political controversies about entrenched clauses, language rights, the mounting rise of oppressive legislation, which resulted in the completion of the apartheid pyramid during the last session of Parliament.

For many years now it has become more and more apparent that the policies pursued by successive governments are awakening and strengthening the very things they have wanted to remain asleep and weak.

The outworn and immoral creed of white domination, must give place to a truly representative and democratic government.

in our November issue. Readers are invited
this series.

after the Nats.

By MR. JOE MATTHEWS

Joseph G. Matthews, born in 1929, has taken an active part in the youth movement. Son of Professor Z. K. Matthews, he is one of the few African attorneys. He was a pioneer in the A.N.C. Youth League, and was arrested during the Defiance campaign.

(The following report appears in a London newspaper 1972)

From the stand that had been specially set up for foreign journalists it was difficult to see the end of this immense crowd. We understood from South African journalists that there had never been such a huge gathering in all their history.

For weeks people had been streaming into Cape Town from all parts of the country. From the moment the date of the opening of the new parliament had been announced the people of South Africa started to converge on the City. Although the new government of the country had made special efforts to see that foreign journalists and visitors were well cared for it had been difficult to obtain accommodation in view of the large numbers of visitors to the City.

I had last been in South Africa 15 years previously covering the Treason Trial of 156 prominent leaders of the democratic movement. Even then it had been quite clear that the neo-Fascist Nationalist regime could not last forever. The Treason trials had been a historical divide — a turning point.

In the course of the 15 years following that trial the democratic movement had gone through tremendous tribulations and difficulties. But under the determined, inspired and often brilliant leadership of the multi-racial South African Peoples Congress all these problems had been overcome. Today it is accepted that the South African Peoples Congress is the dominant political force in the country especially in view of the recent general elections in which it won with an overwhelming majority. Incidentally the recent elections were the first truly, free, equal and universal general elections in the history of S.A.

I have referred to the South African People's Congress as a multi-racial

SOUTH AFRICA AFTER

THOMPSON (Continued)

There are those who believe that the extension of political freedom and economic opportunity is possible without conflict and bloody settlement. There are others who do not believe that justice will be achieved, except by group pressure resisting injustice, leading to inevitable conflict and *inter-racial strife*.

2. Do The Social Forces Exist In Our Country To Accomplish Such Changes?

Yes, I believe that the social forces are both potential and actual, and will become increasingly actual in the next few years.

The Congress movement is in the process of building unity between the people of the different races in our land.

There are also rational and religious resources which are playing, and will continue to play their important part in the overall changes which are taking place in South Africa.

Inter-racial Church gatherings are important, and I hope that the role of the Afrikaner Churches will be considerable, when they are awakened to their Christian responsibility not only in sacrificial missionary expenditure and endeavour, but in removing the "middle wall of partition". The Bloemfontein Conference of African Leaders, the recently held Multi-racial Conference at Wits. University, and the outstanding contributions of the Institute of Race Relations and SABRA's own efforts will continue to indicate the more excellent way of love and goodwill.

Despite restrictive legal measures, the workers solidarity as expressed in many Trades Unions must continue to flourish.

Local welfare organisations and associations are playing a noble part, and the many individuals with truly human impulses are maintaining social contacts across the colour line. The Liberal Party with its non-racial political emphasis, and the Open Universities are of incalculable importance to the future South Africa.

3. What Basis For Unity Exists Between The Racial Groups?

The most fundamental basis of course, is the consciousness when discovered of our common humanity, and the realisation of the Scriptural truth "That God hath made of one blood all nations of men." The Congress movement is the political expression and united front of this fundamental unity, which will become increasingly articulate, and it will then become more obvious that the abstract ideological prejudices which divide us must give way to the forces making for progress, freedom and peace among all the peoples.

4. Is The Accomplishment Of Universal Franchise Feasible At The Present Stage?

YES. A voteless people is a voiceless people. Universal suffrage is an

THE NATIONALISTS

MATTHEWS (Continued)

organisation for lack of a better word. The new authorities are very touchy on these matters and I found that words like "racial" were frowned upon if used in reference to their peoples. This is part of the campaign to wipe out all racialist feelings in the country.

The Congress itself developed out of the four or five separate national organisations that had existed previously. The fusion had not been the product of mere theoretical and ideological considerations. It was the expression of a democratic unity that had been demanded by the people themselves as a result of numerous struggles and sufferings endured in common.

The problem of the means that would be employed to effect a fundamental change in South Africa had always been an intriguing one to us foreigners. In the event most of the prophesies had been proved incorrect.

The South African People's Congress had been able to unite under its leadership a nation-wide variety of classes and groups. Of these the most significant had been the industrial workers. The people in the reserves and the farming areas both of whom had a great stake in the end of the old society had played a great role. Apart from these basic segments of society vast sections of the middle class who had been ruined by the great economic crisis of the sixties that had struck the economies of all but one third of humanity had swung into support of change. Then there were the intellectuals.

It is worthy of mention here that the Afrikaans Progressive Society had been vital in swinging Afrikaner intellectuals and workers behind the policies of the South African People's Congress with which it had eventually merged.

Despite the worst that the reactionary Nationalist government could do the South African People's Congress uniting the bulk of the people of South Africa behind it had been able to win a great victory. The victory was especially memorable for the fact that it had been won practically without violence and no bitterness on the part of the People's Movement. It was a victory based on the overwhelming support of the majority of the people of all nationalities and superior organisational efficiency.

The corrupt reactionary Nationalist regime had been unable to continue ruling in the old way the moment the people were no longer prepared to be governed in the old way. With absolutely no co-operation from the people and completely isolated in a world which had considerably changed the Nationalist Party's reliance on force had been unable to maintain it in power.

The crowd was still swelling bigger every minute. All space within miles of the Parliament buildings had been taken up. A small number of earnest and harrassed policemen composed of all nationalities was trying to control the situation. To anyone who had been in South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA AFTER

THOMPSON (Continued)

obvious objective of all peoples struggling for their freedom, and is being realised in more countries and nations of the world.

It will not be possible for the White rulers of South Africa to maintain their colonial subjects in a perpetual state of tutelage, and experience will prove that those who think and act as though it was an unalterable assumption, are going to be disillusioned. For more and more oppressive laws in the name of Apartheid must bring increasing resentment, strife and eventual social collapse.

The way forward is to face existing realities, and mend our ways before we arrive at the point of no return, so that political rights may reflect more truly the economic and social structure of our multi-racial society. If done soon and co-operatively we shall be saved from the inevitable collapse of a multi-racial society that failed.

The Colonial subjects of South Africa have very little say in the councils of the nation, and to a large extent they are debarred by law and custom from playing that part in the building of a nation to which their abilities and ambitions urge and entitle them.

5. What Immediate Economic Changes Are Likely To Be Found Necessary?

The most immediate economic and political changes that are necessary are to be bound up with the question how to terminate colonialism reasonably and peacefully. This is not something unique in the world of today. Immediate economic objectives must be to secure to every member of the community equal justice and the equal right to live and to remunerative work. This must include that every one has the right to earn his or her living legitimately according to his skill and ability, and the usual right to hold full and secure possession of land. Eventually this would lead to the disappearance of the present reserve system and its implied territorial separation of the races.

The colour bar in industry would be abolished, and every worker would receive his due and living wage, and the stage would be set for an expanding economy, utilising to the full the great natural resources of the country and indeed the continent.

Chester Bowles in his recently published book, "The New Dimensions of Peace" has written, "In much of Asia, Africa and South America, where more than a billion people are living under nearly intolerable conditions, revolution is a word of hope. We have seen that their revolutionary objectives have at least four dimensions — demand for independence, insistence on human dignity without regard to race, creed or colour, rapid economic progress for the benefit of the many as well as for the few, and peaceful conditions under which to live."

No one can doubt that we are living in a world which is being trans-
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THE NATIONALISTS

MATTHEWS (Continued)

before, the spectacle of unarmed policemen controlling a crowd consisting largely of Blacks was a refreshing reminder of the new times.

As regards the policy of the new government we foreign journalists could only guess. It was one of the things that would become clear in the opening speech of the President-General of the Congress who it was expected would be elected President of the Republic at this session of Parliament.

Already, however, in the recent general elections the principle of universal adult suffrage without distinctions of race, sex, colour or creed had been observed. All visible marks of inequality in government departments and in the country generally had been removed with great thoroughness and surprisingly little difficulty. The establishment of friendly relations with all states had already been accomplished. But the problems remained to be solved — in particular the problem of creating a foundation for a prosperous economy that could meet the constantly growing material and cultural requirements of all the people on the basis of higher industrial techniques.

The struggle for freedom had been hard and the Congress had taught that much work would have to be done to remove the legacy of backwardness inherited from the previous South African regimes. But the South African people remained full of confidence in the future.

On this the 26th day of June, however, the people had put all cares aside and gathered outside parliament buildings to celebrate the proclamation of the New Democratic Republic in S.A.

Thompson (Continued from opposite page)

formed before our eyes, and none dare doubt that South Africa must face the necessity of these changes in her own economy.

6. Is Racism So Deeply Rooted In The Consciousness Of The People That Special Measures Would Be Required To Eliminate It? — If So, What Measures Would You Suggest?

Group conflict is a reality, and whether the group be of race, colour, class or religion, it must be continually demonstrated that lesser group loyalties may be transcended in two ways. Firstly, the basic part played by economics in the social order, and the fact that we are economically interdependent both within the Nation and internationally. And secondly, the ultimately decisive factor is the expansion of common consciousness. In this way exclusive group loyalties are transcended.

Presumably, there will always be the Little Rock of Arkansas type of Colour and racial reaction to be cleared up, until mankind learns to beat to the throb of one pulse and humanity.

This seems the ultimate possibility and impossibility!