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CHANGING AFRICA

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Africa today is a continent in the forefront of the thoughts of mankind. From being a once much-neglected, unknown, Dark Continent, it is now in the centre of the world stage and is courted by the great powers.

A vast number of African states, stretching from Morocco in the north to Tanganyika in the south, have achieved their independence with startling speed. With ever-increasing insistence, the 150-million Africans in these countries are demanding the total liberation of Africa — by which they mean the complete destruction of colonialism, an end to white domination and full political rights for all Africans. Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Nyerere—a few years ago they were persecuted and unknown; but today they are among a host of proud Prime Ministers of proud African countries who have taken their place in the councils of the world and whose friendship is sought by even the great powers themselves.

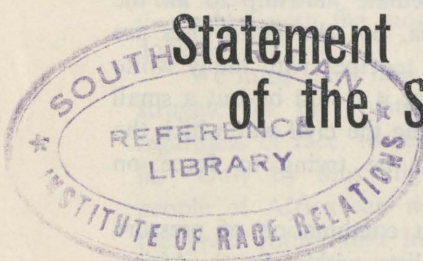
Far from slackening after the momentous year of 1960, the drive towards full African liberation is gaining momentum. Tanganyika is soon to have full independence; Nyasaland and Kenya will shortly have African-led governments; in the Rhodesias the whites have made political concessions, and the Africans are stepping up their demands for full participation in political life. In other territories, the story is the same: in Algeria, France is slowly capitulating to the

Algerian Liberation Army after nearly 6 years of ruinous war, and in Angola and Mocambique, both on our borders, the stagnant and tyrannical Portuguese colonial regime is desperately trying to maintain itself.

In the very heart of South Africa itself, the Africans of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland are tasting the first fruits of political advance—and are demanding more. Finally, the non-whites of South-West Africa are seeking to be placed under United Nations trusteeship as a prelude to complete independence, and at the United Nations they are gaining increasing support for their demands.

It is not surprising, then, that the Africans of South Africa, who have a longer history of political experience and a higher level of political understanding than in most parts of Africa, compare their growing oppression with the great strides made towards independence by their brothers to the north. It is not surprising, either, that far from being cowed by the severe repression that followed the massive demonstrations of March last year, the Africans in our country are more determined and confident than ever, and are gathering their forces to pound even more insistently at the wall of white domination.

The only answer that the Nationalist Government and its inflexible leader, Dr. Verwoerd, has



for this situation is to call upon the whites to get into a laager and fight it out. In order to rule, they are relying in increasing measure on force rather than on consent: and they adopt this policy in the face of all the signs that their position is deteriorating.

Along this road lies strife, bloodshed, eventual failure and lonely isolation from the world.

It is now being accepted, even by the most hidebound, obstinate people, that world opinion cannot be flouted for ever. History has shown that a just cause inevitably comes into its own. The world recognises this, and shrugs off South Africa's claims to exceptionalism, without sympathy.

Today, the Nationalists stand alone. They are despised and shunned by the whole world, as are all those white South Africans who support their policies or remain passive in the face of them. These people fail to appreciate the lessons from other parts of Africa, namely that Africans are achieving political power and that the white minority determines its own future by the extent to which it assists or resists this change.

The Nationalists have reached a stage of severe crisis. They no longer use their once-magic word "apartheid," and their Bantustans are collapsing in ruins. This has been shown in Pondoland and in the other rural areas where the the Africans, formerly so slow to move, offer unrelenting opposition to Bantu Authorities and demand the right to democratic participation in the central government of the country. Nationalist intellectuals, too, are becoming increasingly restless as the pressure of events compels them to face up to the failure of their theories and to the demands of modern Africa.

Finally, the Nationalists are faced with the prospect of total economic, diplomatic and sporting isolation by the outside world. The call for such isolation has been made by the leading non-white political organisations, and, as a member of the Congress Alliance, the Congress of Democrats wholeheartedly supports it. Just as,

at the Commonwealth Premiers' Conference, it was to the leaders of the non-white congresses and not to Dr. Verwoerd that the Prime Ministers listened, it is likely that the world at large will respond to the call of the United Front for economic sanctions.

Sanctions against South Africa will cause considerable and immediate hardship to all the people in South Africa, but the non-whites are used to hardship, and together with many white South Africans feel that it would be but a small price to pay for avoiding the civil war which the Government seems to be trying to force on South Africa.

We believe that a combination of pressure from all anti-Nationalists within South Africa, coupled with powerful diplomatic and economic pressures from without, can further isolate Dr. Verwoerd and his immediate followers and may lead to a re-alignment of forces which will mark the turning of the tide.

We of the Congress of Democrats are vitally concerned with the future of the white man in South Africa. It is precisely because we feel that white domination represents the greatest threat to the continued presence of the whites in South Africa, as well as to the harmonious development of the country as a whole, that we are so adamant in our opposition to it.

We know that the attitude of the white population towards African liberation has had a marked effect everywhere on African political movements. It cannot be denied that, on the whole, settled white communities with a material stake in the status quo are a conservative factor, using their political and economic power to hold back the advance to independence. The use of this power has not prevented this advance, but has tended to lead to the development of violent clashes. This may be an unpalatable fact, but it is unfortunately true and has to be faced squarely.

The more whites who demonstrate their opposition to white domination, the easier will be

the transition to a democratic South Africa; and it is therefore the duty of all whites who wish to maintain their homes in Africa to dissociate themselves from the policies and activities of the Verwoerd Government. Mere passivity is not enough. The Africans expect and are entitled to see an ever-growing number of whites break away from Verwoerd's laager and positively align themselves with the movement for African freedom.

We must show now that we are prepared to struggle for the rights of all South Africans, regardless of race, to rule themselves as they see fit. Only by thus aligning ourselves with the people of Africa can whites expect to share in the great future that lies ahead.

It is in the light of this that the political parties of South Africa must be judged.

The United Party has failed hopelessly as an opposition to the Nationalists. It clings to racialism, and has no policy at all to meet the requirements of emergent Africa.

The Progressive Party represents a welcome break-away from the extremely backward thinking of the Nationalists and the United Party. Its policy of qualified franchise, however, which amounts to an attempt to maintain white supremacy by concession rather than by force, falls far short of the African demand for universal freedom and full democracy.

The Liberal Party has, over the years, come closer to adopting the principle of full franchise rights for all. Its future, in our opinion, depends on the willingness it shows to join wholeheartedly in the struggle for full democracy, and the extent to which it resists the desire of some of its leading members, and of Contact, to split the broad democratic front.

The Congress of Democrats has always stood for full democratic rights for all South Africans. We believe that nothing less than that will meet African demands, that only full and equal rights can secure peace in this country, and that this is only just policy. We base our stand on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights,

and have specifically written into our constitution the inspiring aims of the Freedom Charter, which provides for a free South Africa in which all enjoy equal rights and opportunities, and which guarantees security for all South Africans.

As members of the Congress Alliance, formerly headed by the now banned African National Congress and including the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Congress and the South African Congress of Trade Unions, we have been privileged to come into contact with the foremost African political leaders in South Africa, and have been inspired by the vision of a free and prosperous South Africa. Their maturity and far-sightedness, and their principled and courageous refusal over the years to adopt an anti-white policy, in spite of the fact that it would have been expedient for them to do so, is the surest guarantee that the rights of minorities will be respected.

Through working together with ordinary rank and file members of the other Congresses, we have participated in the process of forging a unity, based upon mutual respect, which has demonstrated in the most practical way that people of different races can not only work together, but actually benefit enormously from co-operation.

A vital necessity is the lifting of the ban on the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress. The banning of African organisations hampers the public expression of African opinion, raises even higher the barriers between government and governed, removes all possibility of discussion and negotiation, thereby removing the means of peaceful transition. The events of the Congo should be sufficient stimulus to white South Africans to encourage the idea of African political organisation, rather than to pursue the present policy of absolute and rigid suppression.

We welcome the response that the African people has given to the call of their leaders for the holding a National Convention of all South

Africans. The Congress Alliance supports this idea, as does the recently-formed Coloured People's Front. A large number of other organisations and churches have also indicated their wish that a national convention be held. Such a convention could save South Africa by bringing together all sections of the people to thrash out the principles of a new constitution.

Everyone will have to make adjustments to the demands of new Africa. It is the Nationalist Government and its oppressive policies which creates a climate of apprehension, in which many democratically-minded whites view the future with misgiving.

By contrast, the advantages of a free, democratic South Africa would be immense.

Instead of being isolated and abused, South Africa will be able to take its place in the world with pride. Once the people of this country have broken the shackles of the colour bar their productive and technical abilities will be freed to help transform the economy of the country and to provide the abundance which our rich land is capable of yielding. At the same time, the whites will be able to make a great and worthwhile contribution; teachers, technicians, doctors and other skilled persons will be in greater demand than ever, as has already been the case in the newly-liberated states in Africa.

How long can race propaganda continue to hide the fact that a society, shared freely with the non-whites, could flourish economically and hold promise of being colourful, even exciting, in

its endless variety of cultural possibilities? There will surely be a flowering of a great, rich and original South African artistic and cultural life.

Finally, a free South Africa will bring about an end to the fear and violence which is such a marked feature of the South African scene at present. Mutual respect will replace mutual hatred, and our children will grow up, not in an atmosphere of hatred for others, but in a spirit of equality and brotherhood.

But this vision of a society free from the restrictions of colour bar cannot be won by kind thoughts and good intentions alone. As a first step, progressive-minded whites must campaign for their beliefs, publicly and with greater energy and enthusiasm. Apartheid with its resultant pass laws, Bantu education, farm labour atrocities, must be exposed for what it is with the enthusiasm of the campaigner, the ardour of the crusader.

In the main, our appeal is based as much on our own self-interest as on the righteousness of our cause. White South Africa dare not continue to live in the old way—making bitter enemies of the majority of the population, and losing its own liberties in the process.

Let us open the road to a new South Africa, in which white and non-white will work together for the common aim of a democratic country, with equal rights for all; a country which will fit into the pattern of the new Africa, instead of being, as it now is, out of step and in conflict with it.

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