

①

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE TRANSVAAL AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT ORLANDO FROM THE 8TH TO THE 10TH OCTOBER, 1955.

JM 22
JM 22

African Chiefs, Headmen, Ministers of Religion, school teachers, intellectuals, tribesmen, workers, men and women, whosoever you may be and wherever you are; in the name and on behalf of the African National Congress (Transvaal), I greet you as the forces that are destined to play a decisive role in the liberation of the oppressed peoples of South Africa from imperialist exploitation and white domination.

We are meeting at an extremely critical period for the people. Both at home and abroad, there are changes taking place, which we should study. Some time ago, the leaders of the Governments of Britain, America the Soviet Union and France met at Geneva, and their foreign ministers are now carrying forward their discussions. These discussions are being held for the purpose of reducing the danger of international warfare, to lessen tension and to bring general disarmament closer. We can therefore only welcome them.

We stand by the decisions of the Conference of African and Asian countries held some months ago at Bandoeng in Indonesia. At this conference, the heads of the Governments of India, China, Egypt, and a great many other countries which only yesterday had the status of colonies of one or other of the big powers of Europe, came together and worked out an independent foreign policy of their own. This in itself was a very important fact. It might be said that many of the countries represented at Bandoeng have not yet achieved full independence. That is true. The Gold Coast is not yet a fully self-governing country, nor is Ceylon and many others who were at Bandoeng. But they are moving quickly towards self-government. That is the important thing. Do you think Britain and America wanted these countries to go to a conference like that and sit down with Mr. Chou En-Lai and Mr. Nehru? No, they did not. Yet they went. They decided on a general policy favouring peace. They laid down that countries with different economic systems should not go to war about such differences. If they have disagreements they should sit down round a table and talk them out. This must be done in the interests of world peace --- to stop a new war. The Geneva meeting was in line with these recommendations. That is why we must welcome the Geneva talks.

Copy No. 100
Copy by ...

The second main principle agreed on at Bandoeng was the opposition to colonialism and racialism. It is wrong that any people should be ruled by foreigners. We must fight against the domination of the great continents of Asia and Africa by European powers. In this matter also, of course, we agree. Freedom and self-determination is our basic aim. If we believe it is right for us, the Africans in the Union, then we should also see that it is right for all people everywhere. The Government of France is very upset because the United Nations wants to discuss what is happening in French North Africa. They say that is their business, their domestic affair which no one has any right to discuss. To us this is very familiar talk. We know how, every year, the South African representative at UN says, "this is our domestic affair --- how we treat dark people at home." But is it their own affair? No, it is not. If a farmer is beating his labourers unmercifully with a sjambok, so that they cry out with the pain, and, perhaps, so that they die --- can he turn round and say, "You cannot interfere: this is my own affair"? The other farmers would like this. But the farm labourers would not. The farmer will have to be charged with assault or murder. If the way France treats Algeria and Morocco has nothing to do with UN why has UN written all sorts of fine things in its Charter about human rights? Is it just for show? The French Government and the Union Government, which belong to UNO, must answer to U.N.O. for breaking the law: for assaulting and murdering people of Africa.

We know we cannot rely on UNO to punish France or to really bring Strijdom to book for an offence against its rules. It is something like those all-white juries which find farmers not guilty of flogging men to death in this country when everyone knows they are guilty. The imperialists will only be defeated by the colonial people themselves. But we must learn and stand together, just as the imperialists stand together in their North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, etc. The people of Morocco will defeat the imperialists

and win their independence; we may be sure of that. Nevertheless, they will be the stronger by knowing that other people suffering from oppression are standing together with them. I think we should send them a message of friendship and sympathy from this conference. I also think we should send a message to the people of Goa who are being oppressed by the Portuguese imperialists, instead of the Portuguese getting out and letting the people join their brothers and sisters in the Republic of India.

It is very interesting to note that the Union Government was not invited to attend the Bandoeng Conference. The reason is quite obvious. The Government does not really represent the people of South Africa at all. It is elected only by the white minority, which regards itself as a master race. It was not Mr. Strijdom, but Mr. Kotane, the representative of the African people and Maulvi Cachalia, representing the S.A. Indian community on whom all the nations of Asia and Africa look as the real spokesmen of the people of our country. We may be sure that all those nations look upon our struggles with sympathy and goodwill.

Our struggle in South Africa has entered an important new stage with the adoption of the Freedom Charter at the great Congress of the People at Kliptown on June 25 and 26 this year. The Freedom Charter is a noble statement of the aims and ideals of the people of our country. We can be proud that it was the African National Congress which took the initiative in calling the historic meeting which gave birth to this inspiring programme and that our Congress, together with its democratic allies of the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation, and the South African Congress of Democrats has produced the Freedom Charter, based upon the demands sent in by countless groups of people all over South Africa.

Let them call the Freedom Charter "treason" and "sedition" if they want to. For us it embodies all our dearest aims and aspiration of the kind of South Africa we wish to live in and our children to grow up in. We shall never abandon the Charter. We shall carry on the fight until every last demand in the Charter has been won: even though the enemy with his cruel and wicked aim of apartheid and baaskap may do his worst to us.

What worse can he do than he has already done? He forces us out of our homes into the wilderness of "Meadowlands". Through his "Bantu Education" schools, he seeks to teach our children to think like slaves, without pride or hope for the future. He bans our leaders, and send police to search them in their homes and places of work. South Africa is becoming just one big prison for the people, with new passport rules to stop any prisoners escaping. Do you want to know your jail number? Look inside your pass book. And soon the passes will be coming for the Coloured and European people too. Some of them are very indignant. "We are not Natives: why should we carry passes?" they say. But did you ever stop to think: if it is bad for you to have to carry a pass, why is it not also bad for the African to carry one? They will have to learn that no one in this country can ever be free while the African majority is enslaved. If this country is a jail for us, it is a jail for everybody. They will have to learn that there is only one road to freedom--- to join hands with the African National Congress and fight for the Freedom Charter.

If we are to succeed in this great campaign for the winning of the Charter all democratic movements and trade unions will have to be made very much stronger. And this applies in the first place to our own organisation, the hope of South Africa, the African National Congress. We believe in Congress and we love Congress. But that must not make us close our eyes to what is wrong with Congress. Many of these things are dealt with in the secretarial report which has been drawn up by the executive committee, and it is not necessary to deal with them now. But we must all be aware of one thing that must be put right. That is the way many people are always looking for a scapegoat to blame when they have done nothing themselves. Some people are always getting into a corner and spreading stories about this or that official, and meanwhile they are doing nothing in their own branches. Others are trying to bring about a split in Congress between "Right" and "Left". They would like to do Mr. Swart's dirty work by hunting for so-called Communists. We know that there are men and women in the African National Congress who were in the Communist Party before it was dissolved. Most of them are hardworking, sincere members who abide loyally by the Constitution and the aims of the

African National Congress. As long as they continue to do so they are welcome and they have every right to be with us. Those people who try to bring about splits are doing mischief to the Congress and helping the enemy. Those people who talk about "capturing" the leadership are doing mischief. Congress belongs to the people, and no little group is going to capture it now or any other time.

There was never a time when the eyes of South Africa and the world were upon us so much as now. The African people are looking to us. I know there are a few so-called Africans who pretend to like the Government. There are reverend gentlemen and school principals who say "Bantu Authorities is fine" or "Bantu Education is good for us." There was one miserable fellow who wrote a poem of praise to Dr. Verwoerd. But everybody knows these people are just licking the boot that kicks them for the sake of a few crumbs. Every African hates this Government of apartheid and police raids, and admires the Congress for standing up to it. They are looking at us in this Conference and in every other Congress meeting, and looking to us for wise and militant leadership. That is why in this Conference and in every other we must think not just of ourselves here but also of the millions who are with us looking on. That is why, too, in this historic year, 1955, the year of the Freedom Charter, in the middle of the worst attack by the political police on the whole democratic and Congress movement, I am proud and privileged to be the leader of the toiling millions in the Transvaal.

pass Laws.

The Nationalist Government not satisfied with the humiliation, degradation and misery the iniquitous pass laws have brought to the African families, has now instructed the political sadist, Dr. Verwoerd, to extend these obnoxious laws to our beloved women-folk, thus adding insult to injury. This challenge must be accepted by every African man, woman and child regardless of the consequences and sacrifice.

Bantu Education.

Bantu Education which has as its aim the mental enslavement of the African child and to consign the Africans to the humble position of hewers of wood and drawers of water, must now be opposed constantly and persistently. New tactics and ways and means must be devised to defeat the Bantu Education Act.

Western Areas.

The campaign against the removal of the Western Areas must be intensified and placed on a national level. The Africans must demand the right to acquire land and to reside wherever they want. Hats off to those African men and women who in the face of police terror and provocation did not sell their properties and did not move voluntarily to Meadowlands.

Education.

The time is long overdue for every member of Congress and follower to raise his political level by acquiring political education. The policy and programme of the African National Congress must be studied and understood by every member.

Discipline.

Discipline is one of the fundamental essentials of a sound organisation. Hence there must be strict discipline in the African National Congress, otherwise there is bound to be chaos. Leaders and members must abide by majority decisions, pay dues, subscriptions and levies and the proper time; attend all meetings and committee meetings.

To you, leaders of all categories, I say: remember that the common people are the best judges, and they are the last and highest court of appeal. Let us therefore not abuse the honour the people bestowed upon us, by having elevated us to the position of leaders. Let us never play or gamble with their rights.

Collection Number: AD1812

RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961

TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

©2012

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of the collection records and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a private collection deposited with Historical Papers at The University of the Witwatersrand.