

peasant in the reserves desires the freedom to possess and till his land. The impoverished worker in the cities desires the freedom to sell his labour at a wage sufficient to provide him with the ordinary amenities of life. The merchant desires the freedom to trade where-ever there may be opportunity to do so. The student desires the freedom to develop his talents to the fullest and so on. The aspirations of all these different sections must be incorporated into the idea of freedom. For this purpose every section of the population must be consulted thoroughly and the democratic demands of all sections be incorporated into a Charter which must become the Magna Carta of the people of S.A. The drawing up of such a Charter of freedom is the immediate task of the C.O.P.

To this patriotic task the C.O.P. calls upon the people of S.A. to dedicate themselves. This call of the C.O.P. has already found a response in numerous places in the country. In the Transvaal and the Cape, in cities and in dorps work has already begun in Natal too, at Durban and in the Northern Districts the work of the C.O.P. has commenced. To the people of the Natal Midlands we now issue this call to join in this great task.

ISSUED BY THE
NATAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL COMMITTEE
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CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
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4 (2) C.O.P. (NATAL MIDLANDS REGION)
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A Call To The People

OF

Natal Midlands

Never before have the people of S. A. stood on the brink of such disaster as they do to-day. What was until recently only a threat of totalitarianism has now become a reality. The minority Government of this country is bent upon establishing a Police state on the lines of Hitler's Nazi regime complete with all the beastility characteristic of the fascist set up.

The master race ideology is repugnant to the dignity of all human-beings the world over as was illustrated only a few years ago when freedom loving people throughout the world rose to defend the dignity and worth of human life. Hitler was destroyed but at what cost? Millions paid with their blood and millions made the supreme sacrifice. Who can deny to-day that S.A. slowly and inexorably is moving towards the hated fascist set up? Who can deny then that the people of S. A. stand on the brink of disaster?

FASCISM MARCHES ON

Daily, attacks are made even upon the existing meagre rights and liberties of the masses of the people. Every aspect of our life is assailed by the virus of Apartheid.- the obnoxious doctrine which means not separation but eternal subjugation of the vast majority of the people. We are already tasting the bitter fruits of Apartheid. We no longer have the right to educate our children as we may desire. Apartheid has decreed that all our children require is training to enable them to take their positions as members of a subordinate society. The vast majority of the people have no vote. Apartheid has now decreed that what little franchise was enjoyed by some must also be snatched away. For the vast majority there never was any freedom to acquire land or property.

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In the land of their birth. Now Apartheid has decreed that there must be further restrictions on the meagre existing rights to acquire and occupy property. For the vast majority of workers the right to organise themselves into trade unions never existed. But Apartheid has now decreed that, the almost negligible existing rights to Trade Unionism must also be taken away. Whatever rights to freedom of expression and assembly existed are now daily assaulted in the interests of Apartheid through its notorious weapon, the suppression of Communism Act. Christians and Jews, Moslems and Hindus, Europeans and Non-Europeans, workers and merchants, students and teachers, all are within the reach of the tentacles of the Act. Numerous people have been banned from attending meetings, silenced under threat of persecution, forbidden to move from their localities and now the Apartheid octopus takes a step further. Banishment of individuals has commenced and will no doubt increase. Intimidation, harassment and persecution of all those who dare to lift their voice in protest has become the order of the day.

IS THERE NO HOPE ?

Is there no way out of this seemingly hopeless situation in which the people of S.A. find themselves ? Is there no effective answer to the fascist onslaught that is daily made upon the lives and liberties of the people ? These are the questions that torment the minds of all freedom loving South Africans. Are the vast masses of this land forever to endure the status of hewers of wood and drawers of water ? Will it be for ever freedom for some and slavery for the vast majority ? To each of these questions we answer in the negative. No people have ever endured the shackles of slavery nor is the present plight of the people peculiar or unique in any way. People the world over have fought and overthrown fascism, colonialism, exploitation and oppression and the people of S.A. can be no exception.

We are quite convinced that fascism in S.A. can be fought and democracy achieved because it is not fascism that the people desire but democracy for the simple reason that democracy is in the interests of the people and not fascism.

WHO CAN ACHIEVE DEMOCRACY ?

But how is democracy to be achieved and by whom ? It is patently obvious that the Nationalist Party cannot achieve democracy in S.A. for their Apartheid is the very antithesis of the concept of democracy. The United Party obviously cannot achieve democracy for their economic

integration and social segregation policy is no more than an appeasement of the Nationalist Party's fascism. Can the Liberal Party achieve democracy for S.A. ? The answer is in the negative because they aim to establish democracy by bringing about the most elusive spontaneous "change of heart" in the white electorate which in essence means that it is the white electorate that will sooner or later establish democracy in S.A. But it is 44 years since Union and the mirage of the change heart has receded further and further. In fact if the recent elections, Parliamentary, Provincial and Municipal are any indication the change of heart has been in the reverse direction. The forces of fascism have gained. The swing of the white electorate is towards the Anti-democratic end.

So to come back to the question - Who can achieve democracy for S.A. ? The answer stares us in the face. The one and only force that can achieve democracy is the mighty force of the vast majority of the people of S.A., White and Non-White, African, Indian, European and Coloured. Any attempt to establish democracy that does not take into account this fundamental fact is doomed to failure. From a realisation and appreciation of this simple yet nevertheless profound truth comes into being the **CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE**, embracing all those who subscribe to the ideal of "a government of the people, by the people for the people." The C.O.P. represents therefore, the first concrete step to unite all those individuals irrespective of race, colour or creed who cherish the goal of a truly democratic S.A.

WHAT IS THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE ?

What is the C.O.P. and what are its immediate objectives ? The C.O.P. is sponsored by the four democratically minded national organisations of the people of S.A. viz, the African National Congress, S.A. Indian Congress, Congress of Democrats and the S.A. Coloured Peoples Organisation in order to create a common platform for all those people in S.A. who subscribe to the ideal of democracy for all, and who desire to work towards that end.

The immediate objective of the C.O.P. is to formulate a Freedom Charter for the people of S.A. If the C.O.P. is to express truly the aspirations of the people then it must understand and appreciate the problems of all the people - the workers in the cities and towns, the peasants in the country-side, the merchants, professionals, teachers, students and others. The very idea of freedom has a different meaning in the minds of different sections of the people. The poor landless

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