

# ONE CONGRESS

by Vic Goldberg

Comment and criticism on the following points from Treason Trialer's article in the May 1959 issue of Counter Attack will not leave much space for advancing the "One Congress" point of view, but they do require answering if only to clear the decks for the placing of discussion in its proper setting:- the nature and make-up of the forces in South African society upon which the liberatory movement bases its struggles, from which the movement draws its support.

1) "FOR SUCCESS, LEADERS NEED THE MASSES, ARE THE MASSES READY FOR A MULTI-RACIAL CONGRESS?"

The only occasion in recent years the point has been put to them - the answer has been a resounding Yes ----- or are 1,000 delegates (650 from outside Johannesburg) not representative of the Congress masses? I refer, of course, to the response R. Segal received at the Anti-Pass Conference. Representing 20,000 to 25,000 people (1958 Durban National Conference ANC figures were +- 18,000), they were quite obviously the largest number (mass) ever asked this question.

2) "BUT WE IN C.O.D. ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH EUROPEAN SOUTH AFRICANS ... (AND) ... OUR AIM IS TO TURN WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS INTO PEOPLE WHO DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO THEIR OWN CAUSE OF THE EUROPEAN IN SOUTH AFRICA, TO HIS SURVIVAL, HAPPINESS AND SECURITY."

Here is revealed the tragedy inherent to the separate organisational tactic. Here is revealed the illogical conclusion this whole insistence on "theirs" and "ours" must lead us to.

We are NOT particularly concerned with European South Africans. We are concerned with South Africa and her people.

We are concerned with oppression, or rather its elimination from our homeland: We want democracy, security, happiness, the dignity of man, the survival of man - as man - in South Africa. We want to break down the European-African-Coloured-Asian-Griqua-Malay-Xhosa-Zulu-Venda-Sotho-Jew-Shanghaan-Greek-etc.,etc., complex that plagues South Africa. Out of the diversity of cultures in South Africa we want to create a common South African outlook that still reflects that diversity yet presents a unity in conformity with all that is best in man. We want an African continent freed of this 'group' consciousness - a Free United States of Afrika (this after all is what our participation in Afrika Day was all about), so that one day when the international brotherhood of man is realised on a world scale, the southernmost tip of Afrika will not be in default.

We oppose the "ethnic grouping" of Bantustans; we call for African unity, for an African nation of which we must form a part; yet now we are told that we are dedicated to the cause of European survival.

ARE WE?

Perhaps the N.E.C. should issue a statement on why C.O.D. was formed, what its tasks are, etc., so that we might know exactly what we stand for.

3) THE LIBERAL PARTY : "THEIRS" AND "OURS" AGAIN.

The programme of the Liberal Party can have no lasting appeal to the masses. That is why they stand "outside its ranks." And this is precisely as it should be. It is not the "non-theirness" or "non-ourness" of the Party, but its inability to present a "people's programme" that keeps the masses out. It is because its interests

are basically inimical to those of the masses that it has so far been able to attract only the elements 'Treason Trialer' cites, who are not "fully urbanised" or "fully integrated" but intellectuals, traders - petit bourgeois elements who, fearing the masses, are unable, like the very same elements which have sided with the masses, and do not fear them, to join Congress.

WHY THEN DO I SAY "ONE CONGRESS"

The FREEDOM CHARTER insists that our aim is the creation of a common society. CAN WE REALISE SUCH A SOCIETY FROM BATTLE POSITIONS WHICH ARE INTERLOCKED AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, BUT NOT AT THE RANK-AND-FILE LEVEL?

Are the weapons society has given us: 4 or more groups of people; or those of our population of 14,000,000 who suffer from oppression and those who have thrown in their lot with the oppressed?

"SEPARATION!" the oppressor proclaims, bringing all within the compass of its terroristic rule?

"SEPARATION!" we reply, "because there are different sections with different problems?"

But have the different sections, different problems? Is not our common problem fundamentally the abolition of oppression, the creation of a new South Africa in which "THE PEOPLE shall Govern!"?

Are we organisationally stronger being in 4 organisations rather than in 1? Are we not splitting and duplicating our forces in separate organisations with parallel committees, that only diverge to meet at the top?

Lutuli has said: "I may have more in common with you here than, possibly, with the less fortunate of my African brothers who are still in the Reserves .... to me that is a pointer to the fact that we can build a new type of homogeneous society....." what better place therefore to start that building than in the liberatory movement itself?

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(4)

# AN A.N.C. MEMBER'S VIEW

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Question.

Can the reaction of delegates at the recent anti-pass conference be interpreted as an acceptance by the ANC membership of the idea of a multi-racial congress?

Answer.

IN A CONFERENCE WHERE ALL RACIAL GROUPS WERE REPRESENTED AND WHERE WE WERE WORKING TO CONSOLIDATE OUR FORCES, CONGRESS MEMBERS WOULD NOT HAVE TURNED DOWN APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP BY ANYONE PRESENT SINCE SUCH A REFUSAL WOULD HAVE IMPLIED UNWILLINGNESS TO WORK TOGETHER. THEY APPLAUDED THE GESTURE NOT BECAUSE THEY DID NOT THINK, BUT BECAUSE OF THE MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS MADE. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO DOUBT THAT HAD THESE SAME DELEGATES BEEN PRESENTED WITH THE PROBLEM IN A DEBATE THEY WOULD NOT HAVE ACCEPTED THE SUGGESTION.

THE WHOLE LEADERSHIP OF THE A.N.C. IS CONVINCED THAT IT WAS NOT CORRECT TO CALL FOR A MULTI-RACIAL CONGRESS. The A.N.C. was formed to organise the African people from different tribal groups into one solid national movement to defend their interests. That process is not yet complete, but we have gone a long way towards our goal. Simultaneously, the Congress alliance is progressing and is achieving far greater unity than artificial suggestions could and preparing the people for this common society of the future.

Opening the membership of Congress would have the reverse effect. People would now begin to argue that this was no longer the national movement representing the interests of the African people, as was the aim of Congress, and the need had therefore arisen for a new organisation to represent the interests of the African people.

Q.

Have the A.N.C. and the S.A.I.C. a mass following?

A.

Mr. Goldberg denies that they have, but he gives no facts or reasons for saying this. It is a fact that whenever there is a problem in the reserves, in the docks, in the townships, the leaders come to the A.N.C. for help and advice. You do not determine the strength of an organisation purely by the membership figures, particularly if such figures were published in the World. The membership figures of 18,000 at the last conference was sub-

sequently corrected by the World when it was explained that it was taken from the credentials report, before delegates from branches had arrived at the conference and taking into account the fact that many branches had not paid their dues to head office in full and were not therefore entitled to representation up to their full quota.... Last year, for example, Port Elizabeth alone claimed 11,000 members and with the adjoining branch of Zakile, 20,000.

As for the S.A.I.C., thousands of Indians attend its meetings whenever they called in Natal or the Transvaal. There is hardly a child who does not know about the SAIC and not a single adult who does not know the name of Dadoo or Naiker. The fact that not one Indian registered for the franchise some years ago because of the call of the Indian Congress is an indication of how much following the SAIC can claim. The representation of the Indian community before every hearing of the Group Areas Board is further proof.

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C.O.D. HAS ALWAYS SET A VERY HIGH STANDARD FOR DEMOCRATIC EUROPEANS TO FOLLOW. THIS ALONE IS AMPLE JUSTIFICATION FOR ITS EXISTENCE.

By AN ANC MEMBER.

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