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FIGHTING TALK

Vol. II. No. 4.

Price 6d.

Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper.

JUNE, 1955

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SPECIAL ISSUE

on the

CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

JUNE 25 AND 26

Pages 3—6

NOT YET TOO LATE COMMENT

DESPITE the newspaper thundering, there is an air of futility about the United Party campaign against Strydom's Senate Bill. At Johannesburg's protest meeting Mr. Strauss turned many a well-polished phrase about the "flame of liberty"; but to the pertinent question: "What can we do?"—which

was shot at him from a dozen different corners of the hall—he turned only a deaf ear. The question remains unanswered by the Parliamentary parties. There has been a faint flicker of response from the *Rand Daily Mail*, which suggested a half-day shut-down of shops, factories and offices on the day of the Mayoral protest meeting. But apart from this, the Parliamentary opposition has confined its broadsides to the battle of words. The Nationalists have shrugged their broadsides off, unconcerned, repeating to themselves the old schoolboy adage about "sticks and stones..."

The burden of rallying the people to action against the packing of the Senate must fall by default on the Congress movement, the heart of the people's movement outside of Parliament. The response, in the moment of crisis, should have been better. The Congress of Democrats entered the fray, with a leaflet calling for the leaders of all sections to initiate a national standstill in protest. But where were the others?

It is argued by some that this Parliament of White men only is the concern of the Europeans, and not the Non-Europeans. Let the Europeans protest and fight the Senate Bill. The argument is false. Parliament is under attack because, within limits, it obstructs the completion of Strydom's fascist state. And fascism's worst excesses will be borne, as all South African tyranny is borne, mainly on the shoulders of the Non-European. The Congress movement has come of age. It is the real spearhead of the anti-fascist opposition in the land today.

It must act as the leader and inspirer of anti-fascist action, or lose its place. At times like these, when the main European political bodies are abdicating from the struggle, the Congresses should address themselves not only to the Non-European people, but also, and equally, directly to the European citizens, urging them to action in defence of their own threatened liberties, preaching to them the need for black-white unity in action to beat back fascism. It is still not too late.

THAT Americanized periodical *Drum*, which has a wide circulation amongst Africans, interrupted its usual fare of pin-up girls, hep-cats and gangsters to ask, in a recent issue, "How Yellow Is

BASE DRUM Congress?" It was a careful piece of writing, in the vein: "We don't know if you're yellow, but some people are saying so." No doubt, the careful editorial fence-sitting, and the completely neutral air with which *Drum* publishes a dignified reply by Oliver Tambo, will deceive the simpletons. But it shouldn't deceive anyone else about the malicious, muck-raking intent behind it. Sometimes tolerance can be carried too far; and in their attitude to *Drum* it is being carried too far by many Africans who support the Congress. It is now time for us to ask a question: "How disgusting can the yellow-press get?" We will refrain from commenting on *Drum's* stablemate, the Sunday paper *Golden City Post*, with its posters about "Two-sexed girl on Rand." *Drum* itself gives enough scope for investigation. Perhaps its editor would expand on the theory in the issue referred to earlier, in which one of the pin-up queens becomes the peg on which to hang a revolting piece of incitement of racial hostility between Africans and Coloureds. Even the strip cartoon is an offence. Week by week *Drum* readers are conditioned to the atom-maniacs' cold-war preparations by the story told in pictures, of how a gallant crusading, American adventurer succours the world from the villainous, cut-throat assassins in the pay of People's China and the Soviet Union, who gloat wickedly over every blood-thirsty prospect of war and destruction.

It seems to us that the time for toleration has run out. A Congress boycott would not be out of order, unless *Drum* beats a different tempo.

THE most cynical newspaper report we can remember, quoted verbatim from the *Rand Daily Mail*: "Coquilhatville (Belgian Congo), Sunday.—King Baudouin of the Belgians arrived in Coquilhatville today for a one-day visit to the Equator province.

"Early today aircraft zig-zagged over Coquilhatville and the neighbouring marshes and jungle to clear the area of mosquitoes for the next twenty-four hours. Tomorrow the King will fly to Luluaborg."

Western civilisation really is marvellous!

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COMRADES FOR THE CHARTER

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE, convened at the call of the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the S.A. Coloured Peoples' Organisation and the S.A. Congress of Democrats, will meet at Kliptown, near Johannesburg, on June 25 and 26. This Assembly will proclaim the needs and aspirations of the great mass of South Africans in the FREEDOM CHARTER. Here L. BERNSTEIN writes on the stirrings of the people for the Assembly.

IT IS THE EVE of the Congress of the People. The work of knocking on doors, speaking to housewives, labourers, teachers and mechanics draws to a close. The demands of simple people for the things they want of life begin to form a pattern whose sum will be stated in the Freedom Charter. The request for delegates' credentials and still more credentials grows into a spreading torrent. It is three weeks before June 25th, 1955 — too late now to do all the things that might have been; too early to know whether everything has succeeded as was planned and hoped for.

It is the eve of the Congress of the People. And time to be thinking of what is now to come.

Sometimes, reading history of days that have gone, one thinks with envy of the men who lived in the great periods of change, when all men's destinies were being determined by their own acts. Perhaps, in some future time, men will look back on our age with just such envy; for it is easier to live in the presence of history than to be aware that we are making it. Yet insistently the thought keeps recurring that, whether we are aware of it or not, we are making history of our country and of our time with this Congress of the People, this tiring round of meetings, canvassing and passing out of handbills.

THE PEOPLE STIR

For something new has begun to stir amongst our people. Those who have been knocking on doors, talking Congress of the People to their neighbours, will tell you of it. Somewhere in this campaign, the idea has filtered through to the men and women in the shack-towns and the back yards that they can make their own future more certainly, more capably than all the politicians. It has shown itself in the calm, self-confident tone of the demands that have poured in. It has shown itself, too, in the quick understanding amongst unlettered working people that the Freedom Charter will become a living force for progress, once it has emerged from all their own demands.

It is difficult to assess what touched off the spark that begins to smoulder. Perhaps something in the Call to the Congress of the People awoke an echo in men's hearts. Perhaps the simple handbill "If you could make the laws..." opened a new vision. Perhaps the Defiance Campaign roused new spirit of national pride and confidence. Perhaps repeated Nationalist acts of despotism spread the spirit of revolt against the old order. Perhaps the experience of the school boycott opened eyes to the need for a nation-wide, united campaign for change. Probably it was all these, and

much more. The Congress of the People struck an echo because it was timely, because it expressed the need for a charter of change, for a programme of struggle for change, which the majority of our country-men, for one reason or another, are seeking.

The spark has been touched off. That much is certain. Nothing that can now happen to the Congress of the People can undo what has been done. The idea of a Freedom Charter has evoked a tremendous response. The demands for inclusion in the Freedom Charter have been gathered in their thousands. Nothing can now prevent the writing of the Freedom Charter. For some, especially for those who have carried the burden of spreading the Congress of the People message from door to door, there is strong temptation to lean back satisfied, to take the job they set themselves as done. It is the eve of the Congress of the People. It could be the end of a campaign. But it is only the beginning. June 26th will be the end of the great assembly, the Congress of the People.

ONLY THE BEGINNING

But the Campaign for the Freedom Charter will only be beginning. There have been cynics enough to state in advance that the Freedom Charter will remain a grandiose paper declaration, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." If times were different, they could perhaps, be right. But this time they are wrong. A spark has been set off by the Congress of the People campaign; thousands, perhaps ten, perhaps twenty thousand people, at meetings throughout the country, have had their say about the content of the Freedom Charter. For them this is not "another declaration" but their own declaration. For them the Charter represents the summing up of their own desires, the declaration of their own beliefs; it will be, for a long time, the credo by which they live and think and work.

Can such a declaration rest there, the private property of some ten thousand people? If it does, it will wither and die; for its very basis lies in this: that here, in this Charter, is gathered the voice of the majority of our fellow citizens, the things they long for, strive for and struggle for together, until they have been won. Each and every one of those who have raised their voices demanding changes in their way of life, can be inspired to go out as Campaigners for the Freedom Charter, evangelists who stir their neighbours to see the glorious tomorrows which are possible if they and their neighbours also stand and live by the Freedom Charter.

There is something of this crusading spirit already in the air. The very thought of the new life of freedom

has induced it. But that crusading spirit needs to be fanned, to white heat, so that it spreads like a flame throughout the land, reaching into the remotest villages and farms, calling the ordinary people of this land to a united stand for liberty, rousing them with the passion of the Marseillaise—"The day of dawning greets the world!" This above all is the spirit that must surge forth from a successful Congress of the People. This above all is the campaign to which the Congress movement must inspire the country.

CRUSADE FROM THE CRADLE

It is said that in the stirring days when Americans fought for their liberty, there was not a child in the land who was not taught and reared in the spirit of the stirring words of the Declaration of Independence, not a single true patriot who did not take as his guiding star and as the principle of life which united him in brotherhood with all his countrymen: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, and amongst these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This is the spirit and the understanding which must be inspired by our own Freedom Charter amongst our own people.

It is not a task of days or weeks which the Freedom Charter Campaign opens out. The days of campaigning to win all true South Africans for the Charter

may stretch out over months and years. But once started, it can never be stopped. For here, in this Charter, speaks the voice of the people of South Africa—black people, brown people, white people, people who till the land and mind the machines; people who work with their hands and their brains, people who rear the youth and teach them. Here is the real, challenging voice of the people of South Africa. It is a voice that can never be silenced, while men are men, and freedom remains a shining beacon on the horizon of their desires.

We are living in the presence of history. We are starting out with firm tread on the history of the liberation of our own land and of all its peoples. This is the meaning and the message of the Congress of the People and of the Freedom Charter. Wherever men stand up to fight for any of the good things of life which make up freedom, they will, from now on, know that they fight together with all who support the Charter. Wherever men speak out for liberty, they will know that they speak not for themselves alone, but for the millions of their fellow men who uphold the Charter.

The Congress of the People is not the end, but the beginning of a stirring chapter in the history we make for ourselves, the beginning of the surging advance of our people towards freedom. It is the eve of the Congress of the People, and of the opening of the campaign of thousands, united, as comrades for the Charter.

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE CALL

We call the people of South Africa—Black and White

LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM!

We call the farmers of the Reserves and Trust Lands

Let us speak of the wide land, and the narrow strips on which we toil. Let us speak of brothers without land, and of children without schooling. Let us speak of taxes and of cattle, and of famine.

LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM

We call the miners of coal, gold and diamonds

Let us speak of the dark shafts, and the cold compounds far from your families. Let us speak of heavy labour and long hours, and of men sent to die. Let us speak of rich masters and poor wages.

LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM

We call the workers of farms and forests

Let us speak of the rich foods we grow, and the laws that keep us poor. Let us speak of harsh treatment and of children and women forced to work. Let us speak of private prisons, and beatings, and of passes.

LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM

We call the workers of factories and shops

Let us speak of the good things we make, and the bad conditions for our work. Let us speak of the many passes and the few jobs. Let us speak of foremen and of transport and of trade unions; of holidays and of houses.

LET THE VOICE OF ALL PEOPLE BE HEARD. AND LET THE DEMANDS OF ALL THE PEOPLE FOR THE THINGS THAT WILL MAKE US FREE BE RECORDED. LET THE DEMANDS BE GATHERED TOGETHER IN A GREAT CHARTER OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL ALL GOOD MEN AND TRUE

to speak now of freedom, and to write their own demands into the Charter of Freedom.

LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM

We call the housewives and the mothers

Let us speak of the fine children that we bear, and of their stunted lives. Let us speak of the many illnesses and deaths, and of the few clinics and schools. Let us speak of high prices and of shanty towns.

LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM

We call the teachers, students and the preachers

Let us speak of the light that comes with learning, and the ways we are kept in darkness. Let us speak of great services we can render, and of the narrow ways that are open to us. Let us speak of laws, and government, and rights.

LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM

ALL OF US TOGETHER—

African and European, Indian and Coloured. Voter and voteless. Privileged and rightless. The happy and the homeless. All the people of South Africa; of the towns and of the country side.

LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM

And of how to get it for ourselves, and for our children.

WE CALL ALL WHO LOVE LIBERTY

to pledge their lives from here on to win the Freedom set out in the Charter.

RISE LIKE LIONS

By HILDA WATTS

Just over 100 years ago the people of Britain, struggling for a Charter of Rights, sowed the seeds that later won them the universal franchise.

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?
The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.
Sow seed,—but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth,—let no impostor heap;
Weave robes,—let no idle wear;
Forge arms,—in your defence to bear.

SOMETIMES words from the past strike out today as clearly as if they had just been spoken. Because we tend to think of our own struggles as being unique, we sometimes forget that our struggles are one stage, in one land, of mankind's long, bitter fight for human rights.

Listen, then, to these words of John Frost, one of the men who led the campaign for the People's Charter—not the People's Charter in South Africa in 1955, but the Charter of nearly 120 years ago, in England:—

"It is said that the working class are ignorant, too ignorant to be able to discriminate between a rogue and an honest man if both were to offer themselves as candidates for seats in the House of Commons. The working class raise all the food—make all the raiment—cut canals—form railroads—build ships—construct steam engines, and do all the work in the country, and yet we are told they have not the sense enough to choose members of Parliament."

* * *

AFTER a brutal and unwarranted attack by soldiers, police and armed civilians from the middle class on the people of Birmingham, the gentle and deeply pacifist Lovett declared at his trial:

"The people were justified in repelling such despotic and bloodthirsty power by any and every means at their disposal . . . If the people submit to one injustice after another, which self-constituted authorities impose upon them, they may be eventually ground to the dust, without the means of any resistance."

The time of the People's Charter — this other Charter — was the heroic age of the British Labour Movement. It was a time of tremendous political upheaval, and a great pioneering movement that paved the way for social reform, not only in England, but in many countries.

The Chartist Movement grew out of the rapid development of modern capitalism in England, the coming of machine production, uprooting the old ways of life. Capitalism destroyed the basis of the old handicraftsmen and domestic workers and handloom weavers; the growth of large-scale farming brought the enclosures of common lands, bringing the agricultural population to the status of wage labourers, and driving masses of them to the new industrial towns. It brought into being the factory workers, terribly exploited and oppressed. "The life of the working people was marked by a misery and degradation which defies description," wrote S. A. Dutt. "Torn from the accustomed way of living which made their previous hard life tolerable; separated from Nature; herded in filthy factory towns; their family life destroyed through the factory work of women and children and the excessive working hours; the workers became aliens in their own country."

UNITY WITH ENGLAND'S CHARTER

A tremendous upsurge of the Trade Union movement began in the 1830's, and gave rise to the hope that emancipation could be achieved through industrial action only. But the unions were smashed, and workers began to take a wide interest in social, economic and political questions. They formed educational circles and clubs, read radical and socialist literature, organised lectures and discussions, gathered in groups to read newspapers and books that they could not all afford to buy, or could not read themselves.

The government did everything in its power to prevent literature and newspapers reaching the people. Heavy "Taxes on Knowledge" were imposed, making the price of a small newspaper or pamphlet prohibitive to working people. Publishing, printing and distribution of unstamped newspapers were made illegal. Many who later became leaders in the Chartist movement spent years in prison for publishing penny pamphlets and newspapers.

1837 was the first year of a severe five-year crisis, which brought terrible suffering to people already inhumanly exploited. By 1842, one person in eleven had become a pauper. The demand for a new reform of

Parliament began to grow among all sections. The country was seething with unrest, but there was no unity. That unity came with the Charter.

The People's Charter was born in 1837 by the London Working Men's Association, and was originally a manifesto of six points, calling for universal manhood suffrage, annual parliament, vote by ballot, payment to members, abolition of property qualifications, and equal electorate districts.

It came at the right time. In a few weeks it was the programme of a vast movement, and the peoples' demands as a whole merged into the single movement for the People's Charter. The movement against the Poor Law, against child labour, for factory legislation, and various other demands all rallied to the Charter.

What was the magic of the Charter? Why was it able to unite many varied tendencies, many movements with different aims, into one great movement? *It was because its points gave clear expression to the peoples' gropings towards democracy, emphasising the common immediate needs of all sections.* To many who supported it, it meant different things, and to the working people it meant the end of exploitation and oppression, the end of wage slavery, a home fit for free men, food and clothing for their families, the right to education and culture.

"MORE PIGS, LESS PARSONS"

The campaign for the Charter began with a monster demonstration of 200,000 people in Glasgow in 1829, when a programme of action was adopted — a national petition, a convention of delegates, and a "solemn holiday month," (a form of general strike).

Huge meetings with as many as 300,000 people followed in other big industrial centres, and the slogans expressed the mood of the people:—

"FOR CHILDREN AND WIFE WE WAR TO THE KNIFE." "THEY THAT PERISH BY THE SWORD ARE BETTER THAN THEY THAT PERISH BY HUNGER."
"MORE PIGS, LESS PARSONS."

There were torchlight meetings and processions. In each area propaganda for the Charter centred around the peoples' most pressing needs; in Scotland and Birmingham the issues were universal peace, freedom of religion, and education for all; in factory districts the main themes were the factory system and legislation, the torture of children, the iniquities of the Poor Law and the need for arming.

A petition of 1,250,000 signatures was presented to parliament after a Convention had been held—and was rejected in parliament by 235 votes to 46. There were clashes throughout the country between the government and the workers—in Birmingham, despite the proclamation of martial law, the importing of masses of London police, a ban on meetings, and other measures, the workers actually held control of the town for five days. The People's Convention later issued the following resolutions:

"This Convention is of the opinion that whatever and whenever persons, assembled for just and legal purposes and conducting themselves without riot or tumult, are so assailed by the police and others, they are justified upon every principle of law and self-preservation in meeting force by force, even to the slaying of the persons guilty of such atrocious and ferocious assaults upon their rights and persons."

Everywhere the government met peaceful meetings and demonstrations with force and violence, determined to provoke a rising in order to suppress it. The people, in turn, were driven to organise and agitate in secrecy, and began building their own reserves of arms.

In South Wales, where there was militant support for the Charter, there was actually an uprising, which was met with bullets. Fourteen Chartists were killed and over fifty wounded, some of whom died afterwards. There were hundreds of arrests of Chartists throughout the country.

THE SECOND PETITION

But the agitation for the Charter continued—and grew. A second national petition was brought to the House of Commons in 1842, this time signed by 3,317,702 persons.

It was wound on a great bobbin-like frame mounted on poles and carried by 30 people. On the front of the frame was painted "THE CHARTER" and above it "3,317,702." At the back was "LIBERTY" and on the sides the six points of the Charter.

Parliament debated the petition the next day. "I am opposed to universal suffrage," declared Macaulay. "I believe that universal suffrage would be fatal to all purposes for which Government exists, and for which aristocracies and all other things exist, and *that it is utterly incompatible with the very existence of civilisation.*"

The Petition was rejected by 287 to 49 votes.

This was not the end of the Chartist movement, but I have not space to give even a brief outline of the activities, the Conventions, demonstrations, riots, of those seething years.

In its immediate outcome Chartism failed. Capitalism was still too strong, still ascendant. The working class was still not homogeneous, not united, not bound by a common social and political theory.

Perhaps it seemed to those who followed after, that the cause of the Charter was lost. For forty years there was no independent political working-class movement in Britain, and statesmen did all possible to wipe out the memory of Chartism from the traditions of the nation.

SOWED THE SEED

But the achievements of the Chartists were never lost. They sowed the seed that later enabled the British people to win their universal franchise. The teachings of Chartism were carried far over the seas. The Chartist movement was an indispensable part of the foundation of modern socialism.

So today we prepare for another Charter — the Freedom Charter of South Africa. Our Charter also springs from the people—from their sufferings and oppression, from their strength and determination, from their just desire for human rights and liberties. But our Charter is drafted in another age, at a time when history is ripe and ready for its success. And our Freedom Charter will be forged into reality—no matter how harsh the counter-measures designed to destroy it—in *OUR* time, while we are yet able to enjoy its fruits.

Rise like Lions after slumber
 In unvanquishable number—
 Shake your chains to earth like dew
 Which in sleep had fallen on you—
 Ye are many—they are few."

MICHAEL HARMEL ON THE PEOPLE VERSUS THE SENATE BILL

BY rigging the Senate, the Nationalist Party — which received less than half the votes cast at the last Parliamentary election — will be enabled to control over two-thirds of the members of both Houses of Parliament combined. This will put them in a position to comply with the constitutional formalities needed to rid the common voters' roll of the last vestiges of the Cape Non-European franchise.

As is notorious, the Nationalists have been trying to disfranchise the Coloured voters in the Cape for a long time. By a simple majority, they passed a law to this effect through Parliament in 1950 (The Separate Representation of Voters Act.) This law was declared invalid by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, on the grounds that Parliament could not deprive voters of their rights without a two-thirds majority of both Houses.

The Government then tried to upset this decision of the Appellate Division by passing the High Court of Parliament Act. This absurd law, which made Members of Parliament judges of the legality of their own acts, was also invalidated by the A.D.

Now, having substantially altered the composition of the Appellate Division itself, the Government means to increase the membership of the Senate to more than double its former size, and to change the method of electing it, with the transparent object of securing the two-thirds majority required to remove the names of those Coloured men who are at present qualified from the voters' roll in the Cape Province.

SURGING PROTEST

It is a long time since any action of the Government called forth such a massive protest from the White population. Stirring from its lethargy, the United Party has decided for once to make a stand; its members find themselves in the unaccustomed role of "agitators" at public meetings. Even in the Nationalist strongholds of the Pretoria and Stellenbosch Universities, leading intellectuals, by no

means opposed to the Nationalist Party, have been shocked into outspoken condemnation of the Senate Bill. The Labour and Liberal Parties, though the United Party, timid of any association with the "Left," has so far excluded them from its protest meetings, are planning a campaign against the Bill. The Congress of Democrats is carrying out vigorous work to arouse the people to the danger and explain its deeper implications. Some Churches, are entering the struggle, and it is even possible that the Trade Union Council will emerge from its pipe-dream of "no politics" to defend the workers' rights against this evil Bill and its implications.

On the other side of the apartheid fence, Non-Europeans organisations have not been slow to condemn the Bill.

The Senate Bill is not the only blow that the Nationalist Government has struck at democracy, nor is it the worst. It disgracefully gerrymandered the electoral system to increase its majority, through the South-West Africa representation law — with hardly a squeak from the United Party. It has passed a mass of suppressive, oppressive and restrictive laws through the Parliamentary sausage-machine, often enough with the connivance and assistance of Mr. Strauss and his colleagues, caring little for democratic principle and bemused by the elusive hope of plateland votes.

DIRE THREAT

But what the Senate Bill, more than other actions of the Government, has done, is suddenly to reveal to thousands of people the true face of the Nationalist leadership: ugly and twisted with hatred for the common people and their rights, distorted with lust for absolute power. To the profound observer of political affairs, the whole process of which the Bill is a part will serve to illustrate how a Constitution designed to entrench power in the hands of a minority ends by concentrating more and more power in fewer and fewer

hands. Though unable to grasp this central truth as yet, masses of ordinary citizens feel the Bill as a dire threat to themselves and the future of their country. In participating in the protests against it, they express their deep mistrust of the administration, their resentment and dislike of its policy.

The Senate Bill also illustrates once again that the Nationalists cannot admit defeat on any point. As political realists they know that a single defeat at the hands of the people can send their whole gimcrack and shaky edifice of apartheid and race lunacy crashing. And they can be defeated on this very issue. Ninety per cent. of the people of the country are ready to stand against the Senate Bill. If only they could stand together, White and Non-White, irrespective of political affiliations, they could compel the Government overnight to withdraw the Bill.

CHANCE TO ACT

The African National Congress has shown political vision and largeness of mind by offering to co-operate with the Parliamentary opposition Parties in opposing the Bill. Those parties could alter the course of South African history by accepting that offer. For not only would the steady advance to a Fascist republic thus be halted, but also the foundations would be laid of a better future for our country; a future in which the grim shadow of colour and race conflict would be lifted from the land, and all our peoples begin to work in friendship in the building of the noble edifice of democracy.

Here is an opportunity to unite all South Africans in a great common task of patriotism, rising above petty considerations of race and colour, vitally affecting our future. It is an opportunity that may not soon occur again.

"Tell us what to do!" shouted members of the audience, when Mr. Strauss spoke in the Johannesburg City Hall. He did not, and he could not. It is time for the people to tell Mr. Strauss what to do.

ATOMIC DEATH — OR PEACE?

CECIL WILLIAMS writes on

The use of atomic bombs as "conventional weapons"

23rd Oct., 1956 : London

'Sombre crowds are standing outside South Africa House awaiting news of relatives in the stricken area. A member of the High Commissioner's staff said that, although three days had passed since the attack, it was impossible for scientific and relief workers to approach the devastated region of the Witwatersrand. Little hope could be held out for the lives of any of the million inhabitants of the Reef, except for some living on the Far West and Far East Rand.'

23rd Oct., 1956 : London

'Unprecedented scenes of violent hysteria were enacted in the London Stock Exchange yesterday, when frenzied efforts were made to unload millions of pounds worth of South African mining and industrial shares. For the first time in Exchange history, not a single offer was made for the shares which two days ago represented over £3,000,000,000.'

28th Oct., 1956 : Cape Town

'Johannesburg, in the midst of its seventieth birthday celebrations, was last week blasted to eternity. With no hope whatsoever of its ever being rebuilt, Johannesburg will remain for all time a desolate, ugly, tragic memorial to the folly of mankind. Dr. Robert Ritchwell, the South African thermo-nuclear scientist, pessimistically asserts that Johannesburg, far from being a mute memorial, will be for years and years a generating house of radio-activity, which can bring about the extinction of all life on this planet.

'It is possible to deduce that the first hydrogen bomb ever used in anger fell on Malvern, a suburb of Johannesburg. A circle around this point, with a diameter of approximately 25 miles, encloses an area of absolute and complete destruction. There is, almost literally, not one stone left standing on another. There is no trace left of the city's skyscrapers, roads are effaced, parks have disappeared, so massive has been the destruction and the movement of debris. Pictures of the Italian town of Cassino, after the bombardments of World War II; pictures of Caen and Falaise in Normandy, of Coventry and Stalingrad are inadequate to convey the desolation of this vast area of meaningless rubble, under which lie buried over one million white and black South African men, women and children, burnt and blasted into this silent, gruesome graveyard.

'Outside of this circle, the devastation is only a little less complete. Krugersdorp is in ruins, Boksburg and Benoni irredeemably destroyed: Pretoria, proud Pretoria, in its tragic setting looks faintly, heartbreakingly ludicrous.

'Terrifying reports are hourly arriving from towns and villages far removed from the centre of the disaster.

It is estimated that the area of "radio-active fall-out" stretches from Warmbaths, north of Pretoria, to Kroonstad, with an average width of thirty miles. There is little hope of finding many survivors in that huge area. Even in Bloemfontein essential services have been severely disturbed by the number of deaths, the panic and the breakdown of the region's power system.

'No attempt is being made to transport doctors, nurses and public health officials to the Witwatersrand, but medical teams are being formed and flown to the far Eastern Transvaal, the far Northern Transvaal and the Free State, where there are tens of thousands of stricken people, without food, water or attention.'

Out of kindness the above newspaper extracts have been dated October 1956 — eighteen months grace . . . in which to prepare to die or in which to prepare to live, free for all time from the threat of a hydrogen bomb's absolute extinction.

So far the American, Russian and British thermo-nuclear scientists have dumbfounded mankind by the magnitude of this mortal agent they have created. Claim and counterclaim, assertion and denial, secrecy, popular conjecture have all combined to confuse the mind, so that people shrug their fears away. What they cannot shrug away is the reality of the atomic and hydrogen bombs and the dire threat they represent to the human race, not alone to the human race in China or England or Bolivia, but to the human race everywhere. South Africa is included. It is high on the list, because of its strategically important uranium production. Within hours of a new outbreak of war, we in South Africa would be in the front line — with no defence against the ghastly death from the skies.

Let us remind ourselves of the already 'proven' facts concerning the hydrogen bomb.

'The Bikini explosion of March 1, 1954, contaminated an area of 220 miles long and 40 miles broad on the down-wind side of the explosion and an area up-wind and across-wind of 20 miles.' (U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Report.)

'Thus about 7,000 square miles down-wind from the point of view of burst was so contaminated that survival might have depended on the prompt evacuation of the area.' (U.S.A.E.C.).

'The original atom-bomb was equivalent to 20,000 tons of the high explosive T.N.T. The hydrogen-bomb has an explosive equivalent of several million tons of T.N.T.' (U.S.A.E.C.)

'Millions of dead would result if such bombs were exploded in the air over a great industrial area in Britain. Even if some people were in shelter, it would be impossible for rescue parties to go into the area for some time. The mass of wounded and dying in the area of medium destruction would be beyond the power of any rescue organisation to cope with.' (British Statement on Defence, 1955.)

'A great mass of atomised particles would be sucked into the air. Much of it would descend at the point of the explosion, but the rest would be carried away and descend as 'radio-active fall-out.' The effect on those immediately exposed to it without shelter would be fatal within the areas of the greatest concentration of the 'fall-out.' It would become progressively less serious towards the outer parts of the affected regions. Large tracts would be devastated and many more rendered uninhabitable.' (British Statement on Defence.)

'A high explosive shell will blast a body, but the atomic bomb, acting on the chromosomes of the radio-sensitive germ-cell, will blast human heredity itself for all times.' (Mr. J. S. Loughridge, M.D., B.Sc., F.R.C.S., at Queen's University, Belfast.)

Other quotations refer to the deadly effects of radiation on weather and vegetation. Here are enough undisputed terrifying facts to rouse the self-preservation instinct of all intelligent men.

The most insidious and deadly dangerous process yet set in motion in connection with thermo-nuclear weapons is the wicked assumption of the United States military and political leaders that these weapons of mass-destruction are to be regarded as 'conventional' weapons of war. The terror in this assumption must be exposed. It has never been conceded that weapons which can be used indiscriminately against civilian population are 'conventional.' Since the early years of this century there has been an increasing desire on the part of mankind to put a limit to the horrors of war. One prohibition to which most nations have subscribed has been the prohibition against the mass destruction of civilian populations. There has been a prohibition against any weapon of war whose fatal effects are uncontrollable, e.g. gas, bacteria, poison, etc. Now, however, the Americans, without reference to any international tribunal, talk openly of using atomic weapons. In fact, such weapons have already been distributed to American bases and allies round the world.

If you remain silent, you are acquiescing in these appalling menaces. You do not even query your own death warrants.

At the end of last year the NATO powers, meeting in Paris, decided that they would use atomic and thermo-nuclear weapons in warfare, in fact, that they would even use them first (a complete reversal, this, of previous decisions that such weapons would be used only for purposes of 'massive retaliation'). "We shall not hesitate to use the bomb (i.e. the hydrogen bomb) — if

DESTROY THE BOMBS!

says the WORLD PEACE COUNCIL

TODAY, certain governments are basing their military strategy on the use of atomic weapons. They are trying to make the peoples accept it as inevitable. The use of atomic weapons would result in a war of extermination.

We declare that any government that lets loose atomic war will forfeit the trust of its people and find itself condemned by every people in the world.

Now and in the future we shall oppose those who organise atomic war.

We demand the destruction of all stocks of atomic weapons wherever they may be and the immediate stopping their manufacture.

necessary, to be the first to use it if we are attacked." (R.A.F. Marshall Sir John Slessor, broadcast January 27, 1955.) But the NATO powers agreed that the decision to use or not to use the bombs would be a "political" one, to be taken by the governments of the NATO powers. But what a safeguard! Everyone knows that a general staff does not improvise its strategy within a few hours. It is prepared over years, hence the general staff at Fontainebleau. If the planned NATO strategy is based on thermo-nuclear war, then in the moment of declaration of war, that strategy comes into effect. The "choicic" of the political representatives of the 14 countries is entirely fictitious.

It was the Belgian representative to N.A.T.O., Monsieur P. H. Spaak, who summed up the outcome: 'The decisions of the N.A.T.O. Council give the military men exactly what they want. They asked for authorisation to prepare atomic war. They have got it.'

We forget so often why there is this threat of world destruction. It is because the majority of mankind is rallying to the cause of peace. The imperialists are more and more exposed as a tiny minority placing all their hopes in horror weapons because they have no hopes in the support of the people. This is the measure of their desperation.

The people can not passively allow themselves to be led to collective suicide. For that is what is involved. Peace is in grave danger, but the people can reverse the trend to war and destruction. Remember the words of Professor Joliot-Curie, the French atomic physicist, and president of the World Peace Council:

"Tell yourself that nowhere will you be safe and that effective civil defence is an illusion. Understand that the nuclear bombing of any target in the world will sow immediate or delayed death even in places very far away. The problem is: will mankind accept the ruin and destruction, the death of hundreds of millions of human beings, wretchedness for the survivors and the probable birth of freaks, and even the possible annihilation of all life on our planet?"

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

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