

Will the Congress Movement Be Banned? Asks Chief A. J. Lutuli
President-General of the A.N.C.

STRIJDOM'S WAY — OR OURS

RECENT press reports have indicated that the Nationalist Government contemplates the banning of the African National Congress and making further very large scale arrests of its members.

It is apparent that these reports should be taken seriously. It is not the first time such threats have been made at Cabinet level. The present Treason Trial was itself preceded by a statement in the House that the Minister of Justice was preparing to make 200 arrests.

A pertinent question is: why this threat from the Government now?

There is no doubt that the emotional appeal to the colour prejudice of White South Africa has always paid the Nationalist Party handsome political dividends. It did so as far back as the issue of the notorious "Black Manifesto" during the regime of the Hertzog leadership of the Nationalist Party. It was this emotional appeal to colour prejudice, by the presentation to the electorate of a programme of apartheid, that swung the Nationalist Party under Dr. Malan into power in 1948.

Apartheid— or a Common Society

The coming 1958 election will hardly be any different. The African National Congress stands for a common society in our multi-racial country. This idea of a common society is consonant with a democratic outlook of life, whereas apartheid is a negation of democracy. A common society implies the acceptance of a free society where individual liberties, so long as they do not endanger the interests of the state, are paramount, and human dignity is upheld.

Apartheid is so contrary to natural, normal human behaviour that it has to be enforced by numerous stringent laws and regulations. Inevitably the country becomes a police state, as our country is fast becoming or is already. Apartheid violates all standards of decency and humanity. It keeps people ignorant and suspicious of one another. It results in race antagonisms and common loyalty to what should be a common country is never developed. Are there surer ways of retarding the progress of a country than these? It is only closer understanding among the peoples of a nation that has any prospect of creating a united nation living in friendship and mutual respect and these, after all, are the foundations cementing national security and stability. True friendship, mutual respect and understanding grows as a result of contact, based on equality and opportunity for all.

Apartheid makes such contact difficult, and now virtually impossible. Fear, suspicion and domination regulate human relations.

Is this what the Nationalists want? The early history of Black-White relations in South Africa points to the fact that South Africa was on the road to building a common society. This until White politicians introduced segregation by law. **I join those who challenge on historical grounds, and on grounds of normal human behaviour, the claim of the Nationalist Party that apartheid is the traditional policy of South Africa.**

No persecution will divert the African National Congress from working for a common society in our multi-racial country. This is the only realistic and humane policy.

This view is, of course, anathema to the apartheid policy of the Nationalist Party. The Nationalists have no

faith in a future where they will enjoy democracy in common with all the people in our land. The Nationalists look upon the numerical preponderance of the Blacks over the Whites as a threat to their existence. They view with apprehension the organisation of the African people under the leadership of the African National Congress. And so, as their fear mounts, we come to be regarded as the arch-enemy of Nationalism.

Strijdom's Way, or Ours

Perhaps we are. **South Africa must move either their way or ours.** And the threats of the Nationalist Government against us are a measure of the tide which is starting to flow our way. The Nationalist Party now acknowledges, albeit grudgingly, the power of the African National Congress as a growing political force in the country, and as a spearhead of the growing formidable opposition to its baasskap policy and its dictatorial method of government.

The recognition that A.N.C. policy holds out the only perspective for a truly democratic future in South Africa is not limited to Africans alone. Increasingly as United Party opposition to Nationalist policies grows feebler and more hesitant, more and more Europeans must also turn to Congress for its leadership in opposition. **Our common needs begin to transcend colour divisions.**

Whether or not the Nationalists take steps to outlaw the African National Congress this year, in the end such steps will be taken. For, I repeat, it is either their way or ours, and they know this.

The carrying out of this threat to ban the Congress would unquestionably cause relations between the Government, as representing the White section only, and the Non-Whites, to deteriorate still further to a point of open hostility and enmity. No government dare view with equanimity the creation of hostile feelings between it and any section of the people in the country.

We Will Shape the Future

Whether or not the Nationalists will succeed in destroying the African National Congress will depend not on the Nationalist Party alone, but mainly on the determination with which the Congress pursues its aims and carries the people of South Africa forward on the road to a true democracy, based on liberty, fraternity and equality, where moral values shall be respected in the conduct of government and in the regulation of personal relationships.

This Nationalist Party threat can be met and beaten. Not by turning aside from the struggle, but by the African National Congress and all lovers of freedom meeting it as a challenge, and answering that [challenge by a bolder, more courageous and more vocal stand for all the things they believe in.

For myself **I am confident that the African National Congress will meet bravely this threat to its existence.** We know that the future will be shaped by our own actions. We, the African people, who far outnumber the other racial groups, cannot, in honour, hope to ride to freedom on the backs of other groups struggling for freedom. Such parasitic behaviour would rightly earn us the ire and contempt of our contemporaries everywhere. We must make our own history. And this means that all Africans should feel challenged to give the Congress full support, and make of it an honourable and effective spearhead of the liberatory movement and the principal spokesman of the African people.