

Nonviolent
REVOLUTION
in South Africa

By **GEORGE M. HOUSER**

with a Foreword by

Z. K. MATTHEWS

*President, Cape Province Branch
African National Congress*

FELLOWSHIP PUBLICATIONS

Sponsored by
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Americans for South African Resistance
Congress of Racial Equality

25c
20c in quantities of 10 or more

Printed in the U.S.A.

January, 1953

by

FELLOWSHIP PUBLICATIONS

21 Audubon Avenue

New York 32, N. Y.

FOREWORD

THE SPOTLIGHT of world publicity has been focussed increasingly on the Union of South Africa. In that unhappy land a struggle that bodes ill for the future of the country is being carried on by the government, pursuing a policy of white supremacy ostensibly for the benefit of 2½ million whites, and the nearly 10 million non-whites who reject this policy and are determined to fight for freedom from the racial segregation in all spheres of life to which it subjects them.

In the recent debates in the Seventh Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations this conflict received considerable attention, as a result of which the Assembly adopted a resolution appointing a commission to inquire into and report upon the apartheid (separation) policy of the Union Government.

It is obvious that the more information we can have about the theory and practice of apartheid, the better. Any action of any individual or group, inside or outside South Africa, in a situation like this must be based upon a careful study of the issues involved. It must seek, moreover, to make a contribution to the solution rather than the further complication of the problems confronting the people—all the people—of South Africa.

The non-white groups in South Africa do not control the instruments of communication and are in no position to make their voices heard in the councils of the world. Hence it is all too easy for such a study to lose sight of the significance of the movements and forces at work among them.

A perusal of this pamphlet will show that the writer has made a serious study of the points of view of these groups and of the significance of the nonviolent civil disobedience in which they are at present engaged under

the sponsorship of the African National Congress. As one who has been closely associated with the struggle of the non-whites in South Africa for freedom and self-determination in the land of their birth, I welcome this addition to the growing literature on the subject.

**Z. K. MATTHEWS, President,
Cape Province Branch, African National Congress**

I

SOUTH AFRICA is in turmoil today. In a six-month period, beginning June 26th, 1952, more than 8,000 Africans and Indians had been arrested for violating apartheid laws imposing racial segregation and discrimination upon them. For the first time a mass nonviolent civil disobedience campaign has aroused the African people to a determined effort to change radically the unjust conditions under which they have lived for so long. Manilal Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's son, wrote from his home in South Africa after the campaign was three months old: "I am simply amazed at the nonviolent spirit and the discipline the Africans in the present struggle are showing. No one had dreamt that they could keep so calm, cool, and collected. Father's spirit seems to be watching over and guiding them."

A campaign which, before it started, appeared so ill-advised to many observers and even potential sympathizers, shows no signs of weakening. It gathers new volunteers and gains strength as it continues. As one young leader of the campaign remarked: "The Africans are all on the march, and whatever the result of the present defiance campaign, even if it ends in total defeat at the hands of the government, the country will never be the same again."

This development in South Africa cannot be seen isolated from the situation on the whole continent of Africa. The "Dark Continent" is the only extensive portion of the earth where the European powers still maintain colonies. But this condition is not destined to prevail much longer. Changes can take place quickly. It must be remembered that within the short space of the last six years, European control of Asian countries has

ended. China has broken ties with the West, India and Pakistan are free of British domination, Burma has severed any political connection with the British Commonwealth of Nations, Indonesia has broken with the Dutch, and the Philippines have been granted independence from the United States. But in the whole of Africa there are only four countries that have any degree of independent status—Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, and the Union of South Africa. Britain and France have the largest colonial empires in Africa, but Belgium, Spain, and Portugal control large sections. Africa has a population of about 200,000,000, of which only about 4,000,000 are Europeans. The national revolutions of the future will occur in Africa, following those in Asia.

The nature of the struggle for freedom in Africa varies from country to country, with colonialism and white supremacy alternating as the principal oppressor. In Tunisia and Morocco, for instance, independence from France is the major issue, while in South Africa colonialism in the ordinary sense of the term is not the primary factor. The Union is a free dominion within the British Commonwealth. Its two and a half million white residents ("Europeans"), for whom it is as much a homeland as it is for the Africans, control the country politically and economically for their own benefit, not through a colonial office, but by virtue of institutions they have created and laws they have passed. The black South Africans here are struggling to achieve equality of status.

On the other hand, in most of the countries of Central and East Africa, such as Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Tanganyika, and Kenya, a somewhat different but not altogether dissimilar situation prevails. Although these are colonial countries with ultimate power resting in the colonial office of a European power, the mere presence of a minority of permanent white settlers who have dominant positions in the colony serves to give the movements of the Africans an anti-white character.

On the Atlantic side of Africa virtually no Europeans have settled, and the people's movements in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone are aimed primarily toward national independence, without the issue of domination by white settlers.

At the same time the color factor cannot be overlooked anywhere in Africa. Whether the principal problem is colonialism or domination by European residents, the fact remains that control is exerted by white people. Out of this has developed a strong undercurrent of black nationalism that could lead to a pan-Africa movement. Although no such movement

has gone beyond the discussion stage, the emotional rapport is present to create it. When Seretse Khama was forbidden to return to his tribe in Bechuanaland because he had married a white woman, there were repercussions in all parts of Africa. When the British recommended a Central African Federation that would mean the extension of white settler control over the Africans in Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, it met determined opposition from Africans in all parts of the continent.

Fear is the basis of the policy of the Europeans. They are afraid that their civilization will be uprooted by the more primitive tribal culture of the Africans. They see their political dominance in jeopardy, their economic privileges threatened, and their social superiority challenged. It is ridiculous to suppose that Europeans who are out-numbered by almost 50 to 1 south of the Sahara can much longer subjugate the Africans. Yet the Europeans pass laws which take the land away from the people, legislate wages below a subsistence level, impose racial segregation, deny the franchise. The only real solution is one that would eliminate the racial factor from the mind of the Europeans, get rid of the discriminatory laws, and establish real equality. But this is precisely what the Europeans will not do because of their deep-seated fear. Thus revolution more and more comes to seem to the majority of the people the only course open to them if economic and political rights are to be gained. It can only be hoped that this will be a nonviolent revolution such as the one that has begun in South Africa.

II

THE NEWSPAPERS and periodicals in the United States have not given much coverage to recent events in South Africa. The news we have received has dealt mostly with the constitutional crisis and the struggle for political control between the Nationalist Party of Dr. D. F. Malan and the United Party headed for so long by Field Marshal Jan Christiaan Smuts. It must be understood that this narrow political struggle is to a considerable extent irrelevant to the present civil disobedience campaign. Both parties, whose membership is open only to Europeans, are agreed in fundamental policy toward the African natives. Douglas Mitchell, the leader of the United Party in Natal Province, made this statement, according to *The New York Times* of August 28th, 1952: "If this civil disobedience campaign is completely successful, the white people in this country will rally

behind the Government. No white population in South Africa will accept with equanimity what will be deemed to be a threat to our continued existence as white people of this continent." No matter which party is in power, the policy *vis a vis* the Africans will be guided by the same principles with minor strategic differences. Nevertheless, to understand the South African problem one must have some background in the political complications prevailing there.

The Dutch were the first white men to come to South Africa. They arrived there in 1652, and settled to the south, in what is now the Cape of Good Hope, where they lived in isolation from the rest of the world. They had virtually no contact with Africans, whose villages were much farther north.

The English came toward the end of the Eighteenth Century. The Dutch, who now called themselves Afrikaners and in isolation had developed their own Afrikaans tongue, then began a northward trek to avoid contact with the English. This migration led to the first wholesale conflict between the white settlers and the natives. The Africans were easy victims to the superior weapons and the military power of the Europeans. Enslavement and confiscation of land followed. The Afrikaners established themselves in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, while the English were dominant in the Cape of Good Hope and Natal; but the conflict between the Afrikaners and the British did not end.

Eventually it led to the Boer War of 1899. The English won, and in 1910 established the union of the two Afrikaner republics and the two British colonies under a single government. The war left a smoldering bitterness between the English-speaking and the Afrikaans-speaking people. The Afrikaners still feel stifled by what they call the encroachment of British imperialism. The Nationalist Party is composed primarily of Europeans of Dutch background, while the United Party is composed largely of people of English stock. The present political struggle in part, then, simply reflects the historic conflict of these two European peoples who settled in South Africa.

When the Union was formed in 1910 it was agreed by the Afrikaners and the English-speaking people in South Africa on the one hand, and the British government on the other, that two basic rights would be guaranteed by the Constitution unless later abrogated by a two-thirds vote of a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament. The first was that the English and Afrikaans languages would be the official languages of the Union. The

second was that the non-racial franchise of the people of the Cape Province would not be removable or alterable. Of the four political units that formed South Africa, the Cape was the only one in which the Africans as well as the Colored people (a term used to describe those of mixed European-African parentage) were permitted to vote. The Africans were removed from the regular roll of voters in a government headed by General Herzog in 1936. The necessary two-thirds majority was obtained for this constitutional change. The African voters were thereafter placed on a separate roll known as the Cape Native Voters Roll and permitted to elect three Europeans to represent them in Parliament. But the vote of the Colored people remained intact.

In 1948 Dr. Malan's Nationalist Party won a narrow victory in the general election and so obtained control of the legislature. One of the stated aims of this government was to take the Colored voters in the Cape Province from the regular voters roll and permit them in a special election to choose only four Europeans to represent them in Parliament. The Speaker of the House ruled that an ordinary majority vote was sufficient to accomplish this, rather than the two-thirds required by the Constitution. The highest appeal court of the land overruled this decision.

Malan threatened to set up another court and take away the power of the regularly constituted one, but was forced to back down. Thus there is a deadlock in the government between the legislative and judicial branches, causing a constitutional crisis. The United Party vigorously opposes the government's position, not out of deep concern for the voting rights of the Colored people, but because if the Nationalists can with impunity enforce this change, other civil rights more closely affecting the English-speaking people may also be arbitrarily denied.

It is largely chance that the civil disobedience movement comes at the time of this political crisis. The main outlines of the current campaign were planned before the constitutional deadlock developed.

III

THE POPULATION of the Union of South Africa comprises approximately twelve million souls. About 300,000 of this number are Indians, who reside mainly in Natal. Indians were first brought to South Africa as indentured servants in 1860. Another million of the people are those referred to as Colored, most of them living in the Cape Province. The

European population numbers about two and a half million, with roughly a million of English background and a million and a half of Dutch ancestry. The native Africans are by far the largest section of the population—about 8,000,000 people. White people are commonly called Europeans and the darker-skinned people, whether of Asian or of African background, when referred to as a group are called non-whites or non-Europeans. It is the Africans among the non-Europeans who are leading the current campaign.

The vast majority of the native Africans live in three different strictly regulated types of location in South Africa. The largest group (about 40 percent) live in what are called native reserves in rural areas. Traditionally the African people are a rural folk, who have lived in tribes and whose economy has consisted of farming and cattle-raising. This way of life is continued by those still in the reserves, although the trend is for an increasing number of people to move to urban areas. A basic reason for this population trend is found in the distribution of land as between white and black, a result of discriminatory legislation passed by the white South African government which makes it impossible for the Africans to make a subsistence living from the land allotted to them. By the Native Land Act of 1913 and subsequent land laws, the Africans have been given only 12½ per cent of the land, and on the whole it is inferior. It will not support the number of people (and cattle) living on it. Because the land is poor, the government has tried to enforce a law limiting the size of the herds which graze on the land. The most prized possession of the rural African is his cattle, and it has been very difficult for the government to enforce this law. Periodically, a government representative conducts a cattle census and indicates which of the stock must be culled. In 1943-44 a number of public auctions were arranged by the Department of Native Affairs, at which 27,048 cattle were sold, but this represented only about 1 per cent of the cattle in the reserves. Thus the government has had to take sterner measures and has enforced the liquidation of stock through local supervisors. The Africans naturally reason that if the Europeans would give up some of the 87½ per cent of the land which they control, stock limitation would no longer be necessary to preserve the fertility of the land in the native reserves.

A second group of Africans (about 30 per cent) live as laborers on land owned by Europeans. As defined by the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, and later amended, African labor tenants may live on the land of

European farmers, but must give 180 days of labor a year to the owner. The tenants, under this Act, may be given a small plot upon which to live, and possibly one or two acres to farm if the European owner so desires. In addition, the white owner is required to supply at least a minimum of food. Finally, cash wages are to be given the laborers at the approximate rate of \$1.50 to \$2.00 for men, and 70 cents to \$1.50 for boys and women per month. During the half year when the farm laborers are not obligated to work for the white farmer, they may till the small piece of land loaned them, or, if permission is granted, may go to an urban area to work. Failure to return to the farm at the time stipulated in the permit is a criminal offense under the Native Service Contract Act of 1932.

The final 30 per cent of the Africans live in urban areas. As defined by the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1923, it is only under the strictest conditions that Africans can live in or near cities. They cannot own any land there. They must live in segregated urban locations* where the housing is unbelievably congested. They can remain in an urban area only when permission has been granted and when they have work or are looking for work. As pointed out by Ellen Hellman in the *Handbook of Race Relations in South Africa*, "The urban area is to be regarded as an enclosure where the European interest is paramount and within which the native may only be permitted more or less on sufferance." The African population has steadily grown in the cities because the possibility for eking out an existence in rural areas has decreased so appreciably. Since 1926 the number of Africans in urban areas has gone up by about 60 per cent. This trend has greatly disturbed the Europeans, who see in it a real threat to their civilization. This has led the government to tighten even further the laws restricting the movements of Africans in urban areas.

The principal means of controlling the movements of the Africans is through the Pass Laws. These laws require that the non-Europeans must produce permits to allow them to enter or leave any given area. An Act of 1945 requires non-whites to have the following passes in the designated urban areas: 1. a registered service contract for a male; 2. a permit which allows a male to look for work; 3. a certificate of approval for a woman from local authorities or from the Native Commissioner of the district from which she comes to join her husband or other male; 4. a badge for a male laborer; 5. a document allowing a person to enter an area not

* Unless specifically exempted as in the case of domestic servants, or registered owners of property acquired prior to the passing of the Act, with the consent of the Governor General.

specifically for the purpose of seeking work; 6. a night pass to permit an African to be out after the curfew; and various other permits such as lodgers' and visitors' permits in the locations. In addition, if a farm laborer wishes to come to a city for the six months he is not required to stay on the farm, he must have a permit from the farm owner and from the local authority of the area from which he comes. Since it is illegal not to carry the prescribed passes, it is not too surprising that as many as 100,000 Africans are arrested in a single year for not having the proper permit. The greatest number of arrests in South Africa in the ordinary course of events is for violations of the Pass Laws.

The strict laws applying to Africans in urban areas keep them economically at the bottom of the ladder. The chief employment for Africans in these areas is unskilled work in the mines. The Mines and Works Act of 1926 precludes Africans from any except unskilled jobs, because they cannot obtain certificates of competency. About 17 per cent of the male population is so employed. In other manufacturing fields, the native Africans also are assigned to only the heavy manual and unskilled work while the Europeans do the supervising. For instance, in the processing of stone, clay, and earthenware, Africans are about 88 per cent of the labor force throughout the Union.

It is obvious that Europeans depend on cheap African labor to maintain their economy. Wages are unbelievably low. The average cash wage of Africans working in the gold mines in 1944 was not much over \$100 a year. Yet one of the incentives that take more and more non-Europeans from rural areas to the city is the relatively high cash wage possible compared with the potential income in the native reserves or on the European farms. A study made in 1939 by Cape Town University revealed that while only 6 per cent of the Europeans were living below an absolute minimum economic standard, about 50 per cent of the African and Colored population and 20 per cent of the Asiatics were. For a family of five a minimum standard would require at least an income of about \$380 per year.

Non-Europeans are barred almost completely from membership in labor unions with Europeans, and although Africans have unions of their own, they are not recognized by law, and the African workers are thus deprived of collective bargaining rights.

The tax system discriminates against the African. Every male African between the ages of 18 and 65 pays a one pound tax annually, no matter what his income. A European with an income equal to the average of the

non-European would pay no income tax at all, and Europeans below 21 and above 60 are exempted from taxes entirely. Of course non-whites who have an income above the minimum pay an income tax on the same basis as Europeans. In addition to the direct income tax, Africans also pay a tax of from 50 cents to \$5.60, a pass fee amounting to about 30 cents a month, and a hospital tax. None of these taxes are paid by Europeans.

Adequate housing cannot be demanded by the Africans themselves since they do not have the income to pay an economic rent. The government, whose responsibility it should be to supply housing, has not done so. Shanty towns have been erected by the Africans themselves outside the larger cities such as Johannesburg. Many of the shacks are built of sacking stretched over reeds. One indication of the completely inadequate housing conditions was revealed by the mass pass raids of 1943 when 13,000 Africans were arrested in ten days, the vast majority being found as unauthorized lodgers on European premises.

The above facts indicate some of the conditions which make the present situation revolutionary. Economically the Africans are impoverished. Their tribal civilization has broken down because their land has been taken away from them and they can no longer support themselves by their farming and cattle-raising. They have migrated to the urban areas where their existence has been severely regulated by a European urban society. They have been herded together in urban locations where the worst kind of slum conditions prevail. They are denied decent education and the right to jobs that would provide the semblance of an adequate income. They are segregated not only in housing and jobs, but in all public places. Apartheid (segregation) laws regulate where Africans must ride on trains, where they may sit in public places, which doors must be entered, which line to stand in, etc. In this respect the situation in South Africa does not differ markedly from the Southern part of the United States, where segregation is imposed by jimcrow laws. The difference is that the trend in the United States is toward increased equal rights, whereas in South Africa the government under the Nationalists is going in the opposite direction. To cap it all, the non-whites have no political rights, being given the dubious privilege of electing only Europeans to Parliament and this only if they live in the Cape Province. The Natives Representative Council, composed of Africans elected by Africans, but with only advisory power, was abolished by the Malan government in 1949.

A deep-seated fear motivates the Europeans in imposing this system

on the Africans. Horton Davies, a professor at Rhodes University, describes the situation this way:

"The visitor to the largest 'City of Gold,' Johannesburg, where white and black alike come in their hundreds of thousands to seek their fortunes, would be struck by the apparatus of fear. Perhaps he would not be unduly surprised by the posses of police so grimly silent at the fringes of seditious African conventions or at the sudden police raids into the shanty-towns dignified by the title of 'locations.' I think, however, that he would be amazed at the burglar-proof windows which are 'standard-fittings' for the most modest suburban homes, at the automatics kept conveniently handy in bedside cupboards or under pillows for the use of European men and women alike, or at their insistence on being accompanied when walking through native townships or dark European sidewalks at night. . . . The situation is better in the country districts, but even here the farmers take no chances. Any rustle outside the farmhouse at night would result in a rifle-shot, for here they shoot first and then investigate. Is there another country in the world where the farming community petitions the Minister of Justice to build a jail at their own expense for non-Europeans?"

It is unthinkable that the conditions imposed on the non-Europeans under the impetus of this fear should stand unchallenged.

IV

THE PRESENT MOVEMENT is the first large-scale, united front campaign of the non-European people in South Africa against the unjust laws. Among the Africans there had been some sporadic efforts such as the 1946 pass burning demonstrations at Langa, a Cape Town location. In 1949 there was a general strike of 50,000 workers. But these efforts did not spread throughout the Union and there was never any real cooperation between African, Indian, and Colored organizations. One of the most significant aspects of the present movement is that organizations representing these three groups have for the first time joined forces. A reason for this lack of former cooperation, apart from the separation existing between the Indian and African communities, is that the initiative for such united action had to come from Africans since they were the largest group and had the greatest grievance. But until recently the African National Congress, the strongest of the groups representing the Africans, did not seem to have the dynamic leadership to propose joint action on a mass scale.

Without any question one major source of inspiration for the present campaign came from Mahatma Gandhi and the precedent he set through the nonviolent movements he led among the Indians almost fifty years ago. Gandhi lived for about twenty years in South Africa. He arrived in Durban in 1893, a young lawyer. He was totally unprepared for the treatment that he, as an Indian, would receive in a country where the color bar was so much a part of the social pattern. In his first days in South Africa, he was beaten by a stage coach driver for not moving from a seat which the driver did not wish a non-European to occupy, he was refused hotel accommodations, and he was thrown bodily off a train for refusing to move from a section reserved for Europeans only. This kind of experience led him to organize the Natal Indian Congress, which became a part of the South African Indian Congress after the Union of South Africa was born. Today the South African Indian Congress has joined the African National Congress in the present nonviolent civil disobedience campaign.

Gandhi's first experiments with nonviolence took place in South Africa. The Indian word "Satyagraha" was coined there in a contest sponsored by the newspaper, *Indian Opinion*,* to find an appropriate Indian term to describe the positive character of nonviolent resistance. The first mass movement of nonviolence began in 1906, and with periodic lapses continued until 1913. Gandhi gave momentum and direction to the protests against a law demanding the compulsory registration and finger-printing of every Indian in Transvaal. In a public meeting he said he would go to jail before he would submit to the humiliation of obedience to such an unjust law. Gandhi and many others were consequently imprisoned. General Smuts, then Prime Minister, proposed that he would have the law repealed if Indians would voluntarily register. Gandhi agreed to this, and the jails were emptied of resisters only to find that Smuts did not live up to his word.

Two other laws led Gandhi to call for renewed nonviolent resistance. One was a three-pound tax on every Indian over eight years of age, and the other a law that invalidated every marriage effected by Hindu or Mohammedan rites. This meant that Indian children were illegitimate according to the law, and no inheritance rights would be recognized by the government. A group of Indian women in Transvaal protested by marching across the border without permits into Natal to picket a mine where Indian men

*Founded by Mahatma Gandhi, now edited by his son Manilal.

were working. The women were arrested. The men then went on strike, and under Gandhi's leadership 4,000 of them marched across the border into the Transvaal without permits. Gandhi was arrested three times during this march. Finally all the resisters were arrested, and were impounded at the mines and brutally treated. This aroused sympathetic voices from various parts of the world, even leading the Viceroy of India to praise publicly the nonviolent conduct of the Indians against the excesses of the South African government. The final act that caused the Smuts government to abolish the three laws against which the Indians were protesting was Gandhi's generously calling off the mass action at a time when the government was plagued with a railway strike. Thus the civil disobedience ended in 1913 with a significant record of achievement.

Almost forty years have elapsed since Gandhi finished his work in South Africa, but the heritage of nonviolent civil disobedience is still there. The present campaign is testimony to this.

The African National Congress (ANC) has not been considered an extremist organization. Alan Paton in his recent pamphlet, *South Africa Today*, indicated that some other African groups were more forthright than the Congress, but this was before the current campaign was initiated. Paton said that the ANC had as its ultimate aim equality, but was working to achieve this in "a constitutional and evolutionary manner." The fact that the Congress by no means has a record of revolutionary language or action is perhaps one of the reasons why the present campaign was not taken seriously when first announced. Further, the ANC could hardly have been thought of as representative of the masses of Africans. Although it has been organized since 1912 it probably did not have many more than 5,000 members when it announced plans for the civil disobedience. It is not too surprising, then, that some well-respected Africans, when asked their opinion about the campaign plans, strongly questioned the advisability of inaugurating the movement now.

A leader of one African organization wrote: "They [the ANC] have committed themselves to something they are not able to carry. Such an ill-considered campaign must result in frustration and disillusionment for the mass of people." Another well-known national leader said: "I am convinced that if any oppressed people must fight for their liberation, this must be done by a proper and well-planned organization of the masses. The people should be properly educated and well disciplined in the methods that are to be employed in the fight for freedom and liberation, whether in

a passive resistance action or nonviolent methods. . . . I regret to say the proposed campaign by the African National Congress will bring more harm than good. My personal opinion is that the masses are totally ignorant of what is happening, to say nothing of being organized." The impression that the Congress was not seriously prepared to lead a mass nonviolent campaign was further strengthened by the fact that April 6th was mistakenly thought to be the date for the action to begin. However, the date was planned to be used only for mass meetings. It appeared to many that the Congress leaders were not prepared to initiate action.

Perhaps the Congress leaders were wise in thinking what now seems obvious—first, that the people were ready for a courageous program of action that would call them to challenge the unjust laws; and second, that the membership of the Congress would grow phenomenally if action were initiated. The ANC took the initiative by calling a joint conference of the national executives of the Congress, the South African Indian Congress, and the Franchise Action Council (representing the Colored group) on July 29, 1951. This conference worked out a proposal for the present campaign and laid the groundwork for presenting the plan to the December Conference of the ANC.

The Conference held at Bloemfontein December 15-17, 1951, endorsed the plan for the campaign. The organization executives were instructed to communicate with the Prime Minister, asking him to lead the government in repealing the most offensive and discriminatory of the unjust laws by March 1, 1952. If the government did not indicate readiness to repeal these laws, a date for civil disobedience to begin would be announced. The specific laws for which repeal was asked were:

1. The Pass Laws, which have been described above;
2. The Group Areas Act, which stipulates that each racial group lives and does business only in its own enclave, and with no association with other groups. Under this Act an Indian or African holding property in an area designated as European would be given a limited time to sell his property. This Act is particularly discriminatory against Indians, who hold considerable property in Natal.
3. The Separate Registration of Voters Act, which, as has been outlined, took the Colored voters off the regular roll in the Cape Province without the constitutional two-thirds majority in Parliament;
4. The Suppression of Communism Act, which gives the Minister of Justice arbitrary powers over definition of communism, deportation of

persons, and suppression of suspected newspapers. Anyone in basic disagreement with a government policy could by definition be called a Communist. All the leaders of the campaign have been arrested under this law.

5. The Bantu Authorities Act, which perpetuates the fiction that the African community is still set up on a tribal basis, makes provision for the establishment of tribal, regional, or territorial authorities with advisory powers. The Act was passed at the same time the Native Representation Council was abolished.

6. The stock limitation provisions of the Betterment Areas Proclamation Act, which has already been discussed above.

The Joint Planning Council of the three sponsoring organizations issued a manifesto that is indicative of the high democratic level on which the campaign has been conducted. This manifesto is a ringing challenge for those who have claimed that a black nationalism or a purely anti-white motivation undergirds the movement. It states: "All people, irrespective of the national groups they may belong to, and irrespective of the color of their skin, who have made South Africa their home, and who believe in the principles of democracy and the equality of man, are South Africans. . . . Full democratic rights with a direct say in the affairs of the Government are the inalienable rights of every South African. . . . The struggle which the national organizations of the non-European people are conducting is not directed against any race or national group. It is against the unjust laws which keep in perpetual subjection and misery vast sections of the population. It is for the transformation of conditions which will restore human dignity, equality, and freedom to every South African."

On January 21, 1952, the African National Congress, through its president, Dr. J. S. Moroka, and General Secretary, W. M. Sisulu, communicated directly with the Prime Minister in regard to the demands of the Congress and plans for the campaign. They informed Dr. Malan that if the unjust laws were not repealed by February 29 civil disobedience would be unavoidable. They concluded by saying: "We are instructed to point out that we have taken this decision in full appreciation of the consequences it entails, and we must emphasize that whatever reaction is provoked from certain circles in this country, posterity will judge that this action we are about to begin was in the interest of all in our country and will inspire our people for long ages to come."

In his reply, Dr. Malan chided the Congress for writing to him rather than communicating with the Minister of Native Affairs. But the fact that

he replied to the letter indicates the increasing seriousness with which the proposed action was viewed. He pointed out that "The Government has no intention of repealing the long-existing laws differentiating between European and Bantu*." Then, in expounding the racist doctrine that undergirds the government, he said: "You will realize that it is self-contradictory to claim as an inherent right of the Bantu who differ in many ways from the Europeans that they should be regarded as not different, especially when it is borne in mind that these differences are permanent and not man-made. If this is a matter of indifference to you and if you do not value your racial characteristics, you cannot in any case dispute the Europeans' right, which in this case is definitely an inherent right, to take the opposite view and to adopt the necessary measures to preserve their identity as a separate community." Finally Malan threatened that if the campaign of disobedience should begin, "The government will make full use of the machinery at its disposal to quell any disturbances and therefore deal adequately with those responsible for inciting subversive activities of any nature whatsoever."

In their final response, Dr. Moroka and Mr. Sisulu said: "We desire to state emphatically that it is our intention to conduct this campaign in a peaceful manner, and that any disturbances, if they should occur, will not be of our making."

The Campaign action was planned for three stages. First, the struggle would begin by calling upon a limited group of specially selected and trained persons to go into action in the large urban centers such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, and Durban. Second, the number of volunteers would be increased and the number of areas of action. Third, mass action in both urban and rural areas would begin with an unlimited but still trained group of volunteers. A Joint Action Council of African and Indian leaders was set up to direct the over-all Campaign.

Although the actual civil disobedience did not begin on April 6, the large meetings and demonstrations held on that day served an important purpose. The date had been set aside by the government as Van Riebeck Day, the 300th anniversary of the coming of the Dutch to South Africa under the leadership of Van Riebeck. This was a national holiday. The Africans, however, boycotted the celebrations and held their own meetings.

* The word "Bantu" is used interchangeably with the word "African." Actually Bantu is a language upon which is based the tongues of Africans south of the Sahara.

It is estimated by Professor Z. K. Matthews, president of the Cape Province African National Congress, that 100,000 people participated in these meetings. The meetings were a prelude to the active campaign to be launched shortly thereafter. The high point of the April 6 meetings came with the taking of the pledge especially framed for the occasion: "We, the oppressed people of South Africa, hereby solemnly pledge ourselves to carry on a relentless struggle to repeal the unjust laws as laid down in the plan of action of the African National Congress, supported by the South African Indian Congress, the Colored Peoples organization, and other freedom-loving peoples. We shall do all in our power, to the utmost limits of endurance and sacrifice, to carry out the Congress Call against unjust laws which subject our people to political servility, economic misery, and social degradation. From this day forward we, as disciplined men and women, dedicate our lives to the struggle for freedom and fundamental rights."

V

ON MAY 31, 1952, the Joint Secretaries of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress set June 26 as the date for the beginning of the action. A call for ten thousand volunteers was issued by Dr. J. S. Moroka, President of the ANC. Although less than this number came forward, the impetus of inspired group action and the arrest of thousands of volunteers has attracted new thousands to put the Campaign finally on a firm basis.

The Joint Action Council had planned that about two hundred volunteers a week would be arrested during the Campaign. So far this number has been exceeded. On some days there have been close to five hundred arrested. A letter from South Africa dated November 13th set 8,000 as the number of volunteers arrested. On the opening day 170 were taken into custody. Preceding the planned disobedience, mass meetings were held to observe the inauguration of the Campaign and give those who were soon to be arrested renewed determination and a sense of solidarity. In Port Elizabeth a prayer meeting was held. Thousands attended meetings in Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Orlando.

The first group were arrested in Port Elizabeth at 7:00 A.M. on June 26 for crossing a railroad bridge reserved for Europeans only. Police were on hand to meet the demonstrators. A brief discussion occurred between the two groups; then, singing the national hymn, "Come Back Africa," the group marched past the police and across the bridge. Police

vans were waiting for them there, and all were taken into custody.

Fifty volunteers were arrested on the same day at the Boksburg location near Johannesburg. Led by W. M. Sisulu, General Secretary of the African National Congress, this group tried to enter the location without permits. A letter had been handed to government officials prior to the action, informing them of what they intended to do, saying: "We have been directed by the Joint Action Committee to advise you that in the terms of the decisions of the Congress the persons named in the attached list will defy the permit



(INS)

Although thousands have gone to prison, the campaign has remained nonviolent. Here volunteers take over a train compartment reserved for "Europeans only," in which they rode to Cape Town where they submitted to arrest.



(INS)

Human nature meant that in isolated cases bitterness and frustration would flare out in violence. The amazing fact is that such instances have been so few, while the campaign itself involved thousands of people in organized nonviolence.

been said, but by what has been done. Twenty-eight leaders of the African and the Indian congresses have now been arrested under the Suppression of Communism Act. Thousands of volunteers have been arrested. Yet not one act of organized violence has occurred. On the eve of the Campaign's beginning, according to *The New York Times*, Dr. Moroka made this public statement: "My people will enter into the struggle with faith and determination and act in such a way as to give the whites, particularly the police, no opportunity to use arms. I hope the police won't do anything to provoke trouble and will merely keep order because our people will submit to anything that will be done to them without restraint."

A news item from a July issue of the newspaper, *Daily Dispatch*, in East London, South Africa, indicates graphically the determined and spirited, yet nonviolent, way in which the Campaign is being conducted:

"Shouting, singing and gesticulating; a crowd of several hundred followers of the African National Congress demonstrated outside the Chief

regulations and deliberately court imprisonment by entering Boksburg location at 2:30 without obtaining the necessary permits." The group never got through the gates of the location. They were arrested by waiting police. They sang Congress songs as they were driven off in police wagons.

A third group of 54 were arrested this first day in Johannesburg at 11:30 P.M. for violating the curfew regulations. When accosted by police, the leader of the group replied: "We are nonviolent fighters for freedom. We are going to defy regulations that have kept our fathers in bondage."

The Congress leadership is committed to maintaining a nonviolent discipline throughout the Campaign. The evidence for this is now overwhelming, not only by what has

Magistrate's Office for more than three hours yesterday while some of their fellows in the 'defy unjust laws' campaign were being tried in the courthouse for not being in possession of night passes when found in a public street after 11 P.M.

"Although the crowd was noisy and speakers harangued them periodically, the demonstration was orderly and there were no incidents. Members of the South African Police who were present displayed endless tolerance and good-humouredly responded to the shouts and gesticulations of the Natives.

"A 'highlight' of the day was when the police vans backed up to the cellblock doors to take the prisoners away for lunch. The crowd, swollen to about five hundred and carrying the ANC banner, surged round each van as it was loaded and danced, sang African patriotic songs, and cheered the prisoners.

"The crowd started forming about 9:30 and as the morning wore on it increased in size. A large number had squeezed into the courtroom and the main doors to the Magistrate's Court had to be closed.

"Under the ANC banner and with another banner reading 'Defy Unjust Laws,' the crowd sang 'Nkosi sikelele i'Africa' (the African national anthem) and 'Come Back Africa.' Periodically they responded to cries of 'freedom' by shouting 'hooray' and giving the thumbs-up sign; to cries of 'Government' by shouting 'boo' with thumbs down; to cries of 'Dr. Moroka' by shouting 'hooray' with thumbs up; 'Dr. Malan' by shouting 'boo' with thumbs down.

"The demonstrators left no doubt in anyone's mind when they dealt with the Government and Dr. Malan. Not content with booing and turning their thumbs down, they swept their arms from an upright position right down until their bodies were bent double and their thumbs almost touched the ground.

"They stopped singing only to shout 'Africa' or to listen to speakers haranguing them with speeches in Xosa and in English.

"One speaker told them: 'Remember, you were not born criminals. You were born free. Now you are asked: "Who are you and where do you come from?" and if you have no pass you are thrown into prison among the criminals.'

"He also dealt with the apartheid laws, pointing out that the Government was segregating the Europeans from the Africans. As he spoke he was interrupted by cries of 'Africa.'

"At one stage during the morning, the crowd was quiet while a minister said a prayer. They stood silent and with heads bowed until the prayer was over, and then resumed their singing.

"About 11 A.M., when the police vans arrived to deliver the prisoners, the crowd moved forward and gave each prisoner the thumbs-up sign amid shouts of 'Africa.'

"The great moment came when the doors to the cellblock in Caxton Street opened shortly before 1 P.M. to allow the prisoners to be taken to Lock Street gaol for lunch. About five hundred men and women, their voices raised fervently in song, packed round the police van. Policemen moved back and forth opening and closing the doors and shepherding the prisoners into the vans while the Natives milled round them, stamping dancing and shouting.

"Throughout the demonstration there was an air of light-heartedness and at one time even policemen were to be seen giving the thumbs-up sign, to which the Natives responded with gusto.

"After lunch the 'show' went on, growing larger until it ended about 4:30 P.M. with the demonstrators marching off in an orderly manner through the city behind their banner."

When Nana Sita, president of the Transvaal Indian Congress, was granted permission to read a statement to the court before being sentenced for violating one of the pass laws, he most forcefully gave expression to the nonviolent character of the movement.

"I have deliberately and wilfully committed a breach of the law under which I am charged," said Sita. "This I have done in full knowledge of its implications.

"I am a firm believer and follower of the noble doctrine of peace, non-violence and the brotherhood of man, as expounded by one of the greatest benefactors of mankind and the most outstanding figure of our times, Mahatma Gandhi.

"A renewed effort is being made, particularly by the present Government, to relegate the non-European peoples to a status of perpetual slavery. Being a man of peace, love and nonviolence, I am convinced that I could but serve South Africa by opposing and fighting this un-Christian and racial policy by nonviolent methods.

"I do not plead for mitigation or mercy. I have decided to go to gaol so that my suffering and the suffering of the oppressed people of this land may ultimately bring about conditions which will make South Africa a

happy country for all, regardless of race, colour, or creed."

On August 26 the largest demonstration of the Campaign took place. It occurred in Johannesburg on the occasion of the trial of the leaders of the movement under the Suppression of Communism Act. One who had not yet been arrested wrote describing the scene: "The courts were absolutely jammed with two thousand people inside the building. Outside, thousands more gathered on an open square just a few hundred yards away and a meeting began which lasted until 6:00 P.M. that day. Inside the court, the 'unprecedented' happened, according to an Afrikaans newspaper, when the court adjourned for 15 minutes to allow Dr. Moroka at the request of the prosecutor to address the people. The courtroom door was opened and accompanied by court officials, Dr. Moroka appeared amid shouts of 'Africa!' He stood on a chair and asked the people to leave the building quietly so that the case could go on. They left immediately in perfect silence. They went and joined the crowd outside in a meeting which was orderly throughout."

Manilal Gandhi attracted world-wide attention in the Spring of 1952 when he went on a 21-day penitential fast prior to the beginning of the Campaign. He issued a statement at this time expressing doubts that the leadership and the people were sufficiently trained and disciplined to carry on the movement in a nonviolent spirit. For the first five months of the campaign Gandhi was not an active participant because of his fear that violence might break forth. It is doubly significant, therefore, that recently he has not only spoken so highly of the Campaign's nonviolent spirit, but that he was arrested as a volunteer on December 8th.

Without any question the nonviolent character of the movement was to a considerable extent responsible for the restraint which the police showed early in the Campaign. Only recently have there been reports of large-scale police brutality. The Minister of Justice opened the way for increased violence when he said: "If the policemen go slightly beyond the limits of their powers . . . they should not be condemned in view of their difficult tasks"; and that "While it is possible that innocent people had been struck by police batons," it was "just too bad if such people got hurt." The police have been raiding the offices of the sponsoring organizations as well as the homes of leaders since early August. Virtually all mail suspected of relating to the Campaign in any way is opened by the postal authorities. Police have provoked the recent unorganized riots that have occurred. The A.N.C. has worked hard to restore order in the aroused communities.

Sentences imposed on those who have violated the pass or general apartheid laws have varied from two pounds fine (\$5.60) and 15 days hard labor to ten pounds fine (\$28.00) or 90 days labor. Almost uniformly the fines have not been paid, and the volunteers serve the jail sentences. Youths under 21 years of age have been sentenced to caning. One reason for this is that there have been so many volunteers going to jail that penal facilities are greatly strained. A caning usually consists of four cuts with a heavy stick. Those who are thus beaten are in pain for days thereafter. This is still a legal punishment in South Africa.

The Campaign has brought about a drastic change in the social and political atmosphere in South Africa. One young leader in the movement wrote that "There has been a transformation in the way of thinking of the Africans, a revolutionary transformation that cannot be experienced by anyone not actually present in the country." One indication of this is the growth in membership of the ANC. In the Port Elizabeth area, for instance, prior to June 26 there were only about seven hundred members. Now there are more than twenty-one thousand members, and new people are joining every day.

Another indication of the transformation is the new spirit and vigor of the people. At one time there was fear that when the primary leaders of the movement were arrested, there would be no secondary leadership to take control. That fear has proved unfounded. When the last group of eight leaders were arrested in the Cape Province, that was the signal for 350 new volunteers to go into action. A friend who wrote from South Africa said: "The new commands took over efficiently in a few hours. That should serve as a warning to the government. They must realize that here they are not dealing with an artificial protest organized by a few 'Communists' as they would like all of us to believe, but with a mass movement based on real grievances of the people." It is also significant that the rural people have now begun to participate. They have traditionally been extremely difficult to organize for joint action, but now it is expected that those living in the rural locations will be among the most stable elements in the Campaign.

A development of utmost importance which is a by-product of the Campaign has been the noticeable reduction in the amount of crime traceable to Africans since the Campaign has been in full swing. In Grahamstown the people forced the town Council to close down the beer hall. This kind of action has double significance. Many Africans are heavy beer drinkers.

The government forbids them to make their own beer, but has established beer halls which, through the tax paid for the drinks, supplies a large portion of revenue for the government. By closing the Grahamstown beer hall, not only are the people denying themselves legal beer and reducing greatly the chance that participants in the Campaign will break discipline and react violently to provocation, but they are penalizing the government appreciably. The beer hall in Grahamstown cost the government 8,000 pounds (a little less than \$25,000). Ordinarily it brought the Municipal Council 240 pounds (\$672) a week in revenue.

The people have had new life breathed into them by the vision of freedom being held before them. Our correspondent in South Africa writes: "The ANC has not promised the Africans anything but liberty. We have told the masses to expect death, hunger, difficulties perhaps for years, and in spite of this they are giving themselves as a sacrifice willingly and in such huge numbers. It is an indication of the absolute failure of white rule that so many people should have reached a point where all these difficulties do not deter them from making a determined effort to get freedom."

A final indication of the transformation being brought about by the Campaign is the confusion of both major political parties in the face of the challenge. The United Party, the government's opposition, has been saying two different things. On the one hand their spokesmen have condemned the Campaign. They have urged that it be called off and claimed that it could never be victorious. They have plainly said that when white supremacy is challenged, all the whites in South Africa will stand together. But on the other hand the United Party has been more conciliatory than the Nationalists. The Torch Commando, for instance, the militant wing of the UP, has publicly called upon the government to meet with the leaders of ANC.

The Nationalist Party of Dr. Malan says only two courses of action are possible: to negotiate with the leaders of the movement, or to try to smash it. The first course of action, they say, is impossible because it would mean granting complete equality to Africans, which is unthinkable. Consequently, the government course is one of fighting the movement. The only compromise that has been hinted at is that the Africans have now proven that they are capable of ruling themselves, but not of ruling whites. Therefore the suggestion has been made that apartheid should be extended into the realm of government too, under a program described as "partition." The Africans should be permitted to rule themselves in the African

areas, but the Europeans would continue their government in all other areas.

Some leaders in the Congress have predicted that as the Campaign continues to grow, only two sides will appear as formidable powers—the reactionaries behind the Nationalists, and the progressives behind the ANC. These persons think that liberal white people will either have to form a new political party committed to drastic changes, or else join with the African National Congress. It seems evident that a new day is dawning in South Africa.

The Communist movement is not very strong in South Africa. The civil disobedience Campaign is not in any sense Communist inspired or Communist led. And yet it would be unrealistic not to recognize that there are Communists at work in the movement. This is particularly true in the South African Indian Congress, where several of the leaders are known Communists. A. T. Steele in a dispatch to *The New York Herald Tribune* of August 14 wrote: "There is little doubt that some Communists have infiltrated the passive resistance movement. . . . In any case it is apparent that the great majority of those participating in the movement have no Communist connections." Manilal Gandhi also has expressed concern over Communists in the movement.

The fact that many leaders are being arrested under the Suppression of Communism Act is, however, no gauge of the extent to which the Communists are active. The South African government tragically equates any resistance with communism. The statement which the magistrate made in denying the "not guilty" plea of the arrested leaders indicates this. He said: "It is common knowledge that one of the aims of communism is to break down race barriers and strive for equal rights for all sections of the people and to do so without any discrimination of race, color or creed. The Union of South Africa is fertile ground for the dissemination of Communist propaganda. This would endanger the survival of Europeans, and therefore legislation must be pursued with the object of suppressing communism." This attitude, of course, strengthens the forces of communism.

Max Lerner well expressed what the American attitude toward the movement in South Africa ought to be in the light of the charge that Communists are in the movement: "But it would be fatal if Americans allowed this Communist activity to frighten them away from the cause of South African freedom. It is not a Communist cause unless we withdraw from it and let the Communists have a monopoly of the struggle against racism.

In that case Africa would be plunged into a long night of racial wars."

One cannot underestimate the effect that the Campaign in South Africa may have on the rest of Africa. If it has any measure of success, it will have importance far beyond the borders of South Africa. It may help to temper the terrorism of the Mau Mau group in Kenya. It will give new hope to nonviolent efforts for independence in West Africa. It could lead to the formation of a democratic, pan-Africa movement for freedom based on nonviolence. This would be of great significance not only for Africa but to the whole world.

Although in one sense the conflict in South Africa is an internal one, in a larger sense it is a world issue. World opinion will be a factor to be reckoned with in a final solution to the problem. Just as sympathetic opinion to the cause of freedom helped India gain her independence, so may it also lend support to the efforts of the Africans, the Indians, and the Coloreds in South Africa. The United Nations can serve an important role as a medium for discussion of the issues, and for an examination of policy in the light of the Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights. Every year since 1946, usually under the prodding of India, the UN Assembly has had to consider the policy of the government of South Africa toward its Indian minority, and this year for the first time government policy toward Africans. The United Nations, split between power blocs, has not been able to take a forthright position. Perhaps the time has come under the pressure of events when the UN will actually sponsor a policy on South Africa in harmony with Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter: "All members pledge themselves to take joint and separate action . . . to promote . . . universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."

NONVIOLENCE AND WAR

We of the mid-Twentieth Century live in a world of conflict. Vast numbers of people who have been repressed for centuries are engaged in active revolution, or are stirring restlessly within the hated bonds of imperialism. At any of a score of points on the globe a clash between subjects and rulers could erupt into a war that would tear civilization apart.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation seeks constantly to persuade the controlling powers to cooperate with the legitimate aspirations of all men to freedom, and to work toward the end of abolishing servitude and poverty everywhere.

At the same time, it commends to those who seek freedom from imperialism and racism, and to oppressed minorities everywhere, the technique and spirit of nonviolent resistance used so effectively in both South Africa and India by Mahatma Gandhi, and now in the "Campaign Against Unjust Laws" in South Africa. It believes that nonviolent resistance is the effective alternative to war in solving conflicts, since it speaks to the best in "the enemy" and disarms him by accepting suffering while refusing to inflict it.

For more information about this and related subjects,

Write to

FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

21 Audubon Avenue

New York 32, N. Y.