

excuse can there be for the outrageous statements of Dr. Hastings Banda, also reported in the South African press, in which he states that he is ". . . sick of all these South African freedom fighters", and that no such people need look to Nyasaland for refuge when that country is independent." Dr. Banda adds this piece of gratuitous advice to the freedom fighters of South Africa—they should stay and fight at home. He should know of course, having spent all the bitter, toiling years of the twenties, thirties, forties and much of the fifties in the comfort of London, while South African (and for that matter some Nyasa) freedom fighters laid the foundations for the anti-imperialist, liberationist advances of the African people today. Dr. Banda has swept easily on the crest of a wave to a position of power and authority. He should perhaps have a little humility in speaking of those who have fought a longer fight than him, a harder fight, have suffered worse for it and who have faced a more formidable enemy. And if he is sincerely interested in stopping migrations of people from their homelands, we would make two suggestions to him. First, that he turn his attention to the thousands of Nyasa men who come annually to work in the South African gold mines, where they have no trade union or democratic rights, and that he take steps to implement the decisions of the All-African Solidarity Committee to cut off this stream of cheap labour on which the white state of South Africa relies. And second, that he do something effective to cut off the traffic between Nyasaland and Mozambique, which provides some of the revenue for Salazar's war against the people of that territory and of Angola.

◼ THE LIBERAL PARTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African Liberal Party came into existence as a rival of the Congress of Democrats which now, like the African National Congress and the Communist Party has been outlawed by the fascist Verwoerd government.

The Liberal Party at its inception rejected the African National Congress demand for universal suffrage and committed itself to a policy of qualified franchise. Only after a long process of political education did the Liberal Party ultimately realise that one man, one vote, was the only franchise demand acceptable to the people. When the Liberal Party started it confined itself to parliamentary forms of struggle, and declared that it could free the Africans by winning at the polls; it criticised the Congress movement for engaging in extraparliamentary activity. After losing many election contests the

Party decided to engage in extraparliamentary activity—but on such a small scale and with so many reservations that its contribution has not been worth much. It has for instance not supported a single strike of the many called and carried out in recent years. Every time the Congress movement has called for mass action, the Liberal Party has stood aloof. It seems to fear mass action.

The fear of the Party for mass action is combined with a pathological hostility to Communism. Its hostility to Communism is the common factor between it and all the other white Parties in the country, including the Nationalist Party. It shares with these parties the same tendencies of smelling out and witchhunting Communists in the liberation movement. The Liberal Party studiously avoids forming a united front with the Congress movement because they regard it as “Communist influenced”. They prefer to flirt with the P.A.C. even though they are aware that it is racialistic and without much influence—they share with it one thing and one thing only and that is anti-Communism. The Liberal Party represents the ideas of a section of small industrial bourgeoisie in the country. It concedes that change must come, but it wants a change strictly within the limits of a capitalist society and not accompanied by any radical economic changes. The Party is violently opposed to a revolution in the country as are all the other white Parties.

This explains Liberal opposition to the Freedom Charter, and their reservations in supporting the Congress movement, their fear of mass action and hostility to Communism.

It is also in this context that its resolutions at the last Conference should be seen. The main political resolution of the Party was a condemnation of acts of sabotage in the following terms,

“The Liberal Party firmly rejects violence as a means of attaining political aims, and dedicates itself to the task of giving positive meaning to non-violent resistance in the coming year.

“The acts of sabotage which some people had thought fit to use in recent months had damaged the constructive work of the Party. Everything possible should be done to prevent a reign of terror in which the only distinguishing mark between the opponents would be colour.”

The Liberal Party must be blind if it cannot see the reign of terror which exists now in the country in the name of white domination. In that terrorism the terrorists are a white elected government with the police and military force, its licensed private armies, the women’s pistol clubs, organised thugs and some fat-bellied chiefs.

And the victims? They are by and large the non-white people. This is an armed terrorism of a fully equipped government against an unarmed people, and the terrorism is either supported or connived at by the majority of the whites. All the people's heroic efforts to rid themselves of their living death has evoked more brutal and naked terrorism. What must the people do in this situation—abandon the struggle and submit and allow the Liberal Party to do its “constructive work”?

The people have seen no “constructive” and effective work from the Liberal Party which can save them from the grinding oppression and exploitation. What is this constructive work on which the people must rely for their political salvation? Well, a few months ago the Liberal Party organised a meeting at the Johannesburg City Hall to demonstrate against the notorious sabotage act. A few thugs organised by the Nationalist Party and supported by the police threatened to disrupt the meeting through acts of violence. True to its “positive meaning of non-violence” the Liberal Party called the meeting off, and announced that it was not prepared to expose the public to violence. In doing so they enabled the fascists to do what they wanted: to intimidate and muzzle a legitimate protest. If this is an example of constructive work and the “positive meaning of non-violence” then we know exactly what the Liberal Party stands for: that the people should allow the fascists to have their own way rather than revolt. The Liberal Party did not really fear that the masses of the people would be injured by a few thugs at the meeting. What they feared more was that the people would retaliate. And who knows what that would spark off? It is the spark of revolution that the Liberals fear, the acts of the people, not the acts of the thugs. That is why the Liberal Party is more concerned with the violence by the people rather than the terrorism of the government and its thugs.

Let us not be misunderstood. We are not suggesting that the Liberal Party should carry out acts of sabotage. It can continue to carry on its programme of positive non-violence, and what it considers to be its constructive work. It can continue to put up candidates for municipal elections and educate the whites to see that they can save themselves and the country a lot of bloodshed and chaos by supporting the demand for one man one vote and a national convention. They will be given their credit for what they achieve in this field. What we do say is that the Liberal Party has no right if it cannot stop the violence and terrorism of the government against the people, to condemn acts of self-defence and

retaliation by the people, particularly at a time when the Nationalists are openly boasting that violence against the people and their organisations will be the order of the day. What is the attitude of the Liberal Party to the resistance movements which existed in many countries during the last war? Or to the French Revolution for that matter?

The situation is fast developing in this country when it will be impossible for any political movement to sit on the fence. Either with the people or with their oppressors—the Liberal Party must choose or disintegrate.

