

communities should feel the deepest sympathy with the people of India at this difficult time. The most practical and wise way to express that sympathy is not by giving way to nationalistic and militaristic tendencies, but by throwing their full weight into the scale for a negotiated settlement now.

Dictatorship run mad

Following its serious defeat at the United Nations on the issue of sanctions and South-West Africa (on the latter they did not get a single vote) the Verwoerd dictatorship has unloosed a wave of repression against freedom-fighters and opponents of apartheid. Without any pretence of legal proceedings Balthazar Vorster, Verwoerd's sinister Minister of "Justice" (he was interned during the war as a leader of the pro-Nazi "Ossewa Brandwag") has, within a few weeks:

- ★ Placed Moses Kotane and a number of others—African, White and Indian—under "house arrest";
- ★ Closed down the outspoken democratic weekly newspaper *New Age*;
- ★ Published a "black-list" of 437 "named Communists" and launched a wave of hysterical anti-Communist propaganda from the political platform, in the Nationalist press and over Radio South Africa.

Moses Kotane, former secretary-general of the Communist Party of South Africa and member of the executive committee of the African National Congress, has been ordered by Vorster not to "absent himself" from his two-roomed house in Alexandra Township for the next five years, or to "receive any visitors"—on pain of a heavy prison sentence. A number of others have received similar 24-hours-a-day confinement orders; and still others, including Mrs. Helen Joseph, a leader of the Federation of Women, Adv. Duma Nokwe, former ANC secretary-general, and Mr. Brian Bunting, editor of *New Age*, have been ordered to stay at home from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. and over weekends and also denied the right to receive visitors. These sadistic punishments are imposed by means of an order signed by the Minister without any trial or opportunity of defence—without, indeed, the victims even being informed what they are supposed to be undergoing punishment for. A request from one of the victims, Mr. Ahmed Kathrada, for

reasons for his house-arrest met with a reply that the Minister, Vorster, was "not prepared to furnish" the reasons.

Nor were any reasons given by the Government for the closing down of *New Age*—not in South Africa, that is. It is true that, speaking at a private meeting in London, a leading South African diplomat declared that *New Age* "openly advocated Communism". It is not by chance that he made this ridiculous assertion in Britain, for the nationalists know that if they had made it at home they would have been laughed to scorn. According to the Suppression of Communism Act, it is and has been since 1950 a serious "crime", carrying a lengthy jail sentence, to "advocate or defend Communism or any of its aims".

New Age was a fighting defender and advocate of the people's rights, standing four-square with the national liberation movement in every struggle throughout the years in which it was published. But it did not break the Suppression of Communism Act or any other law—and the proof is that the Government never succeeded in getting a conviction against the paper in any court of law. This was not for want of trying. *New Age* was one of the defendants in the scandalous "Treason Trial", in which charges of Communism as well as treason were thrown out by the judges; and there can be no doubt that the special branch of the police eagerly studied every issue for grounds on which they could arrest the publishers and editorial staff and bring them to Court.

That they were unable to do so is precisely why Vorster made use of the slimy, underhand method of banning by decree, without having to produce reasons which could be tested and proved in a court of law. In just the same way, if Vorster had any valid evidence against the men and women he has placed under house-arrest and otherwise banned by decree, he would have prosecuted them instead of using this equally slimy and repulsive method of dealing with political opponents. His failure to prosecute is an admission and a proof that he has no such evidence. That is the hard fact and logic which no amount of wriggling and bluster can get around.

Anti-communism hysteria

In its attempts to arouse a wave of anti-Communist hysteria throughout the country, the Nationalist government—safe in the knowledge that its enemies have no legal right to redress or reply—has no scruples in sinking to the lowest depths of deliberate lies, abuse and libel. Yet, although it has at its disposal all the formid-