



The New African

Communist Come-Back?

THIS MONTH WILL SEE witch-hunting taken a stage further in South Africa with the publication by the Minister of Justice of the names of persons so far banned or named in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. Ostensibly, his intention is to assist newspapers and individuals in avoiding the crime of quoting any such person. In fact, the measure is designed to frighten yet more people into submission—by showing quite definitely that the Act has been used against a large number of people who are not communists, and suggesting that it will continue to be used for this purpose.

The ineffectiveness of attempts to combat communism—or, for that matter, any other idea—by intimidation and force is amply demonstrated by the appearance, for the first time in more than ten years, of communist parties in Southern Africa. Earlier this year, a Communist Party was established in Basutoland, and we understand that one was started in Swaziland last month. In South Africa, pamphlets and leaflets purporting to be issued by the 'South African Communist Party' have appeared several times in the townships. This Party also publishes a quarterly journal, *The African Communist*, in London and circulates it throughout Europe—and doubtless in this country as well.

The interesting thing about these facts is not that they exist—few people could have believed that communists could be legislated out of existence—but the change in strategy that they imply. Until now, communists have presumably worked in other organisations aimed at removing the Nationalist Government and white supremacy, and they must have hoped to achieve their objects through them. Now they appear to have abandoned this tactic, by emerging if not openly, then at least as a distinct group, separate from other opponents of the regime.

The reasons for the change remain obscure. It is possible that the communists hope to take advantage of the gap left by the banning of the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress. This would, of course, only explain the re-appearance of the South African Communist Party. On the other hand, the decision may have been made as a result of pressure from abroad, which could point to the relative absence of official communist organs in African countries and the curtailment by African Governments of the activities of those which do exist.

Whatever the reason, it is clear that the communists have chosen to campaign openly in competition with, and, inevitably, in opposition to African nationalists. Whether this is merely a formal recognition of an existing antagonism or whether it is intended to prepare for future conflict, is not important. What is significant is that the communists have shown that their policies are not the same as those of the others who wish to bring about the downfall of racial oppression.

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