

FASCIST SOUTH AFRICA

SAM KAHN

(Speech delivered in the House of Assembly on June 15, 1950)

The Suppression of Communism Bill, introduced by a Government among whose members were notorious supporters of the Nazis and which represents at most ten per cent. of a total population of eleven millions, has been followed by almost complete silence of the Liberal and Labour press on this matter. We are pleased to print some important passages from this speech by South Africa's only Communist M.P.—Ed., L.M.

I WISH to deal with the hon. the Minister of Justice's speech on this Bill. He has admitted to this House that his Bill is one of revolutionary character, that it makes drastic inroads into our traditional system. It violates the normal protections of law which are allowed an individual, in that it clothes him with extraordinary, unfettered and unchallengeable powers of absolute censorship of books and newspapers, to suppress political parties at his whim, to blacklist and banish individuals—men and women—from their homes, to remove judges from the Bench, to isolate witnesses and suspects and to remove them from the protection of their lawyers and their counsel. In short, to punish men arbitrarily without trial.

The Minister has regaled the House with some lurid, spine-chilling, blood-curdling, hair-raising stories of Communism, of the vast crime which has been planned by the Communist Party in particular to sabotage our power stations, and among other cruel and wicked things, to poison the reservoirs and the water supplies of this country.

The Minister must forgive me if I recall at this moment the Reichstag fire trial, when Goering, having used the half-witted Van der Lubbe to set fire to the Parliament of Germany, the Parliament of the Reich, was exposed later as having himself ordered the destruction of the German Parliament by fire. Of this arson he accused the Communists. The Minister says the Communists planned to poison water—Goering used fire, the Minister uses water—and I say to the Minister that is a complete and monstrous fabrication, it is a false and vile accusation against the Communist Party, that they have planned any such plot whatsoever. And if the Minister—who has not sucked the story out of his thumb—has been informed to this effect by his police officials, then it is proof that either lunacy is rampant in the police force, or this is another example of police corruption and a conspiracy for the preparation of a frame-up of the Communist Party of South Africa by the Minister. . .

Mr. Speaker, the other aspect of the attacks by the Minister on the Communist Party was that the Communist Party is an incitement in itself, that the Communist Party seizes upon the real and particularly upon the imaginary grievances of the people of this country, exploits them and puts them up against the Government and against the white people as a whole. And I will give this House clear proof, not from my lips but from a source the integrity and independence of which the Minister dare attack at his peril, and I say that that is a vile untruth. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the Minister of Justice, exercising as he will do under this Bill an existing power under the Riotous Assemblies Act, banned a pamphlet issued by the Communist Party known as the 'Malanazi Menace'. That pamphlet was an attack upon this Government and its policy. It related when the Government came into power how they freed the fascists—

The Minister of Justice: This is sub judice.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order! This matter is sub judice at the moment.

Mr. Kahn: It is no longer sub judice. Judgment was given this morning. The Communist Party pamphlet recited the catalogue of deeds of this Government, the freeing of the traitors, the Hitlerites during the war who had been tried and imprisoned for treason, it referred to their racial attacks upon the Non-European people, their oppressive policy of *apartheid*, and it stigmatised the Prime Minister and the members of this Government as being Hitlerite. The Minister brought his powers under the Riotous Assemblies Act into effect and he declared that the document was an unlawful incitement of

the Non-Europeans against the Europeans. . . But because of a fortunate safeguard in that section of the Riotous Assemblies Act, that the Minister's decision to ban a document can be appealed against in the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of the Transvaal today, through Mr. Justice de Villiers, upset and overrode the Minister's ban and ruled that the Communist Party had exercised its democratic right of free criticism of the Government and its policy, that there was no incitement of the Non-Europeans—

The Minister of Economic Affairs: That shows the need for these powers.

Mr. Kahn: It shows that you intend to tamper with the judiciary.

(Here there were a number of interruptions lasting for a few minutes, the United Party calling to the Nationalists: 'Yes, what are you going to do to our judges?' and 'Now you've let the cat out of the bag'.)

The other criticism of the Communist Party which has been made by the Minister—and that is a legitimate criticism—is that he does not like our programme. We do stand for absolute racial equality and peace in South Africa; we do stand for a system of socialism, so that the resources of the land can be devoted to the needs of those who help to produce the wealth of South Africa. The Minister of Justice must indicate this to the House. Is anybody who opposes the policy of *apartheid* of this Government going to be deemed a Communist by the Minister in the future?

Mr. Speaker, let us test this Bill. The Minister of Justice, in his second-reading speech, has declared that the Springbok Legion* is a Communist organisation. Let us suppose that it is. In terms of this Bill, the Minister will appoint his liquidator, his gestapo officer, who will draw up a list of all the members of the Springbok Legion; and under this Bill every person who is a member of the Springbok Legion, or was in fact a supporter of the Springbok Legion, can be named Communist under Section 1 (iii). The Minister can take such people and if they are employees in the Public Service, he can dismiss them; if judges, he can remove them from the Bench; and if they are members of Parliament he can expel them from Parliament and entrench the slender majority of the Government. And all with no right of recourse to the courts. . . All the ex-servicemen of this country, all the trade unions of this country, all the democratic institutions can be condemned without any hearing. The churches can be condemned in South Africa for propagating Communism if

*The South African Ex-Servicemen's organisation.

they oppose and attack the Government's policy of *apartheid* and demand Christian equality and brotherly love for all South African citizens. . .

The history of the peoples' struggle for freedom throughout the centuries has demonstrated one great truth: You cannot imprison ideas. You cannot impale people's opinions on bayonets; you cannot crush thoughts with knobkerries; you cannot concentrate views behind barbed wire; and no amount of suppression, no amount of brutal force to hinder people in the expression of their political views, and the attainment of their aspirations, will ever succeed.

Who, then, is safe in South Africa, when the power to determine whether a man is a Communist or not is in the hands of an enemy of freedom and democracy, who has sworn and pledged himself not only in his political programme, but by secret oaths which he has taken behind closed doors to usher into South Africa a fascist republic, which would obliterate such rights and liberties as we enjoy today? No man before or during an election will dare criticise a government having this power for fear he will be called a Communist under this Bill. Absolute, infinite and unchallengeable powers are given to this Minister to name anybody a Communist, any political opponents, even within his own ranks—

An Hon. Member: You have said that before.

Mr. Kahn: If I have said it before, it requires repetition, for this Bill may be your epitaph one day.

An Hon. Member: It is yours.

Mr. Kahn: Mr. Speaker, I am told by the hon. member there that this is my last speech. This is not my last speech. My words will be imperishable. They will be remembered in South Africa.

Millions of Communists have been suppressed, have been tortured and killed through the long march of history. But remember that today Communism is the social doctrine and political philosophy under which 850,000,000 people are living, covering one-third of the earth's surface.

An Hon. Member: What are you hoping for?

Mr. Kahn: I am hoping for nothing except the end of this Government, and that will be the combined task of the South African people, composed as it is of white, black, English, Afrikaner, Indian, Malay, Coloured, African, Christian and non-believer—all these will be forced together into indissoluble unity by this Government, because of the common suffering they will experience. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is concentrating the attention of South Africa up-

on the 'menace' of Communism as a diversion to deflect the minds of the people from the real danger which there exists for the people and democracy of South Africa. That is the danger of the tyrant and the despot, the racialists who rule South Africa at the present moment.