

THE PASSING SCENE

A Review of Press and Politics in South Africa

By "COMMENTATOR"

The Congress of the Herenigde Party has come and gone. It did not entirely fulfil the fond hopes that were held of it in certain quarters. For weeks before the Congress there was talk of amalgamating the Opposition groups into a single anti-Government front. Behind the scenes the Broederbond, that peculiar secret organisation which Gen. Hertzog once denounced as a curse to the country, was desperately trying to arrange a new "re-union." The negotiations led as far as a meeting between Malan, Van Rensburg, Pirow and Havenga; but it proved abortive. In all probability, too many concessions were demanded of the Malanites; Dr. Malan, knowing that his Party is to-day the strongest single Opposition faction, was in no mood to make concessions.

WHEN the Congress opened in Pretoria on September 16th, Dr. Malan made the Party's position quite clear. The door was open to all anti-Government forces, but on the Party's terms. The Party, said Dr. Malan, needed "the masses of Afrikanerdom" in order to achieve a Republic—but it must be a Nationalist republic, and not the republic which the Ossewa Brandwag had in mind. Dr. van Rensburg wanted a republic ruled by Ossewa Brandwag officers on a basis of National Socialism "in its most naked form." With such a state, Nationalists could have nothing to do. The Herenigde Party aimed at a democratically secured republic, based on Christian Nationalism, and on the principles of peoples' government enshrined in the old Boer Republics. The Herenigde Party unequivocally rejected the dictatorship principle which was in essence un-Christian.

Many Contradictions.

For the rest, Dr. Malan's addresses to Congress abounded in contradictions. He reaffirmed his opposition to the war, and demanded that South Africa should withdraw from the struggle; on the other hand, he assured soldiers that he had no grievance against those "who had joined the army voluntarily." He clearly indicated that the goal of the Herenigde Party was a 100 per cent. Afrikaners Republic, ruled and dominated by Afrikaners; on the other hand, he gave the English-speaking section assurance of equal language and cultural rights in the new Republic, and he deplored the attitude of those Afrikaners who acted "as though the English-speaking section, which numbered 45 per cent. of the white population, did not exist."

He stated that the Party favoured democracy; yet clearly the "democracy" he had in mind was something quite new in "democracies," remarkably different from accepted democratic models, and providing for most undemocratic restrictions—including discriminatory measures against Jews.

On the subject of the Party's attitude to Jews, Mr. J. G. Strydom—who is probably the most influential member of the Party next to Dr. Malan—said that when the Republic was achieved, no more Jews would be allowed to come into the country and "Jews and Imperialists" who were here "would have to leave." Those who remained would have to become Afrikaners.

The Congress decided to prepare, as soon as possible, a "programme of action" for use in the forthcoming election. This programme will contain full reference to the proposed Nationalist Republic and the various "reforms" which Congress discussed in regard to Christian National education, mining and industry, labour and agriculture, the colour problem, and war debts.

Anti-Smuts Election Pact?

The transactions of Congress were marked at various stages by further bitter denunciations of Dr. van Rensburg and the Ossewa Brandwag, and a resolution was adopted urging the government to take action against "secret radio transmitters"—which the Nationalists believe the Ossewa Brandwag possess.

But it would be wrong to attach too much importance to these denunciations and recriminations. The fact that negotiations were actually afoot for a "re-union" before Congress proves that, all differences notwithstanding, the possibility of a new "hereniging" continually exists. However much Dr. Malan may magnify them, the ideological differences between the Opposition factions are not such as to make a compromise impossible.

The "Forum," dealing last week with this very subject, expressed the opinion that "an anti-Smuts election pact (between the opposition groups) is almost a dead certainty." Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, in a speech the other day, also touched on the matter, and warned of a new "unholy trio" which he thought was being formed—a

Pirow-Van Rensburg-Havenga link-up. "There are too many people in the United Party who have retained a pathetic faith in Mr. Havenga, whom they think so moderate and well-meaning," he said. "When it comes to the big issues, our opponents will unite against us. On the question of the war, you cannot trust any of them."

O.B. More Militant.

Meanwhile the Ossewa Brandwag still steadfastly pursues its elected course, along lines of patent Nazi inspiration. It is becoming rather more militant these days, and there is more frequent talk of violence than there used to be. Prof. L. J. du Plessis, addressing a meeting at Carolina last week, said that the "reconstruction" of the state at which the Ossewa Brandwag aimed would "not take place without blood and tears, nor without violence, no matter from which side it started." If it was asked what steps the Ossewa Brandwag intended to take to secure its State, he would reply that an army did not announce its plans for a battle in advance; but "no way of attaining this object will be scorned."

Thus the Opposition groups continue their politics, each faction making its own special bid for mass support. And in all of them, whether they "reject" or "profess" democracy, the basic appeal is 100 per cent. racial. How much of all the talk, the pronouncements and denunciations, is real, and how much is merely a part of the political game? One is entitled to ask this question, because every now and then one gets some little indication of a feeling quite removed

from all this acrimony of party politics.

Tributes to Mr. Schauder.

A typical instance occurred in Port Elizabeth, in connection with Mr. A. Schauder, who this year retires from the mayoralty of the city. All sections in Port Elizabeth have united in paying tribute to the services he has rendered as Mayor—including the very sections which, on the political platform, usually display such intolerance. Nor, Nationalist anti-Semitism notwithstanding, did they fail to take cognisance of the fact that Mr. Schauder is a Jew, and to reckon that to him as part of his good deeds. "Mr. Schauder," the United Party paper "Ons Land," put it pointedly, "is a Jew; but if ever there was a true Christian, it is Mr. Schauder. How despicable is anti-Semitism in the light of such things."

"Mr. Schauder's whole personality is saturated with Christian spirit, and he is a person who believes in the spiritual values, in goodness, love, and nobility," said Dr. L. P. Spies at a meeting of the Afrikaans Cultural Council. "He always helped to further the spiritual interests of the Afrikaans-speaking people in this city."

The Nationalist paper, "Die Oosterlig," expressed the warmest appreciation of Mr. Schauder's work, and thanked him for the goodwill he had consistently displayed to Afrikaners.

Do we not hear in these sentiments the voice of the real South Africa, speaking above the party strife, ignoring current fashions in racialism and their sorry appeal to the animosities and hatreds of little men?

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SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH WAR APPEAL