

AFRICAN VIEWPOINT

WHISPERING CAMPAIGN AGAINST DR. MOROKA

By JORDAN K. NGUBANE

SECTIONS of the African as well as the European Press continue to devote considerable space to rumours that Dr. Moroka, President General of the African National Congress, might not seek re-election when the Congress meets at Kimberley in annual conference a little more than a fortnight from today. Dr. Moroka himself made his position quite clear in a recent interview with 'Drum,' when he said that he would be willing to serve his people in any capacity; in other words, if the African people still want him, he would accept re-election.

The persistence with which his alleged intention to retire from politics is being discussed raises two suspicions. Either the reports of his alleged intentions are inspired by the authorities in the hope that they might sow confusion in the ranks of the defiance campaigners or they are a clumsy move on the part of Dr. Moroka's opponents to shake popular confidence in him.

But to see the whole matter in its proper perspective, let us have a glance at the reasons alleged to be responsible for Dr. Moroka's desire to retire. Firstly, it is being said that Moroka still smarts under what he felt to be a pointed snub from his working committee about two or three months ago when the latter issued a statement in conflict with a pronouncement he had made earlier to the effect that the race question was essentially South Africa's domestic affair.

Secondly, it is being said that Dr. Moroka has been frightened by the threat to imprison him under the Suppression of Communism Act. It is being said that he declined to seek the advice of Counsel for Congress when preparing his defence to show he had no sympathies with his colleagues on the national working committee.

To make it a little more spicy, it is being argued that there is reason to believe that broad hints have been given to him by the Government that if he makes no public appearances on Congress platforms, he might have the case against himself withdrawn.

Thirdly, it is being suggested that when the Police raided the Congress head offices they laid their hands on documents and correspondence about which Dr. Moroka knew nothing.

Some of the letters, it is said, were alleged to have been signed by him when, in fact, he had not done this.

From this the outlines of the oppressor's strategy emerge clearer. By all means, Dr. Moroka will be held out as a reasonable man; a moderate man whose prestige is being exploited by the political "scoundrels" in the working committee who forge his signature or something like that to achieve their own selfish ends.

But what are the facts of the whole matter? Both Dr. Moroka and his executive committee (and, therefore the working committee as well) were elected on the non-cooperation card. He and advisers in the executive committee as well as in the provinces, pledged themselves to carry out the 1949 programme of action.

And since his election this is what he has done to implement his promise: He resigned from the NRC and in that way brought an end to that useless body; he called out the Africans to protest against oppression on June 26, 1950; he brought into being the Indo-African alliance and, finally, called for 10,000 volunteers to defy unjust laws and go to prison for it. As I wrote the response is well on the way to reaching the eight thousand mark. If these has not surprised him, it certainly has exceeded the expectations of some of the leaders of Congress itself.

In short, the African people have, in three short years, demonstrated as clearly as is humanly possible that they are solidly behind Dr. Moroka.

He, on his part, has shown openly that he is a man of courage, a man who will not baulk at the idea of taking grave decisions. Why he should think of running away from his people when everything is now in his favour; when his policy is meeting with success everywhere, in spite of provocateurs who stir up riots, is something I cannot understand. Above everything Dr. Moroka called out ten thousand Africans to go to jail. And by the time the conference of the African National Congress meets in Kimberley nearly ten thousand men and women shall have gone to prison in just

about six months. These are the people who will attend the annual conference either in person or through their delegates. When they get to conference they will expect Dr. Moroka to tell them what to do, now that they have shown they are a solid and disciplined army of free-loving men and women ready to do his bidding. I cannot imagine Dr. Moroka saying he has called them to say he has decided not to lead them anymore, after the sacrifices they made to obey his call!

The enemies of the African people, of course, knew that Dr. Moroka is a dangerous man to trifle with. Enjoying as he does the confidence of the Africans in all the provinces of the Union, they knew that he will not rest before he has got what he set out to obtain for them. The best thing to do now is to start something very much akin to a whispering campaign. If it develops in volume and creates ill-feeling in the ranks of Congress, our enemies shall have triumphed. If it can persuade Dr. Moroka that he should clear out of Congress and make himself a world laughing-stock, our enemies will be the first to poke fun at him.

All this, however, should not be read as an attempt to suggest that everything is in order inside the African National Congress. There are small, mainly non-African pressure groups inside the High Command of the resistance campaign which exercise an influence out of all proportion to their actual contribution to the struggle itself.

There is a tendency to take it for granted that the Transvaal should have the biggest say in the conduct of the campaign, when its performance does not in any way compare with the magnificent achievements of Dr. J. L. Z. Njongwe's Cape Congress.

There are other tensions, not only inside the High Command but also in the provincial Congresses. But none of these are of such a nature as to warrant a dangerous demonstration by the President-General of the African National Congress.

Nor is there a rival on the horizon strong enough to unsettle Dr. Moroka at the moment. It is true, the liberals and some of their friends are already trying to build up what they have been pleased to call "moderate African leaders." Dr. A. B. Xuma, Dr. Moroka's predecessor

in office, has been given the widest publicity in the White Press of late. The idea was to make him the rallying-point of the so-called African moderates and, if possible, to persuade him to stand against Dr. Moroka. In a recent Press statement, however, Dr. Xuma stated quite clearly that today there is no such a thing as an "African moderate." In other words he made it plain that his sympathies are overwhelmingly with the resistance campaign. And there is every reason why he should feel this way. Only a short while ago, one of his closest personal friends, the Reverend James Calata, of Cradock, was debarred from preaching the word of God for six months by the Christian Agency.

Against this background, the wisest attitude to take at this stage towards the rumours about Dr. Moroka's intention to retire is that they are one more attempt to break up the defiance campaign.

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