



AFRICA in Today's World

By DR. CHARLES I. WEST

AN INCIDENT OCCURRED several weeks ago in Johannesburg that received little attention from the outside world. Its significance, blurred by more dramatic happenings on the international stage, cannot be accurately gauged at this time. But it could portend turbulent changes in the political, social and economic life of South Africa in the not too distant future.

Riot police, trained for instant and effective action against any threat to white supremacy in this pseudo-republic's strictly-segregated largest city, were called to the mine workers headquarters to control a demonstration. Ironically, the demonstrators were not blacks, risking bloody heads in a demand for more pay or better working conditions in the mines. The blacks fully realize that such tactics would be futile at this time. Instead, the demonstrators were white miners, protesting the so-called "upgrading" of black workers!

Violence was averted. South African whites do not make a practice of roughing up fellow whites. But the protestants stormed out of union headquarters threatening to stage a general strike in the gold fields of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. These fields account for about 40 per cent of South Africa's export revenue.

Sparking the demonstration and strike threat was an experimental program designed to give Negro supervisors or "boss boys" increased authority. Although union and company officials insist the jobs of white miners are not jeopardized by the experiment, the "rebels" apparently regard it as "the thin edge of the wedge" that could eventually result in an all-black labor force in the mines.

The program, initiated by union officials, was launched last year in 11 of the 55 mines now in operation. Scheduled to end June 30, it was extended 10 days in order to allow a governmental commission to conclude an investigation of its value and implications. That's when the white "rebels" decided to stage the protest demonstration.

THE EXPERIMENT does not give Negroes --who are never called miners, but merely "boys"--advantages over the whites. It doesn't even place them on a par with white workers. It only permits them to do things on their own that previously were supervised by whites.

Union and company officials argue that upgrading black workers will increase production and make wage increases possible for white miners. They claim the experiment already has justified itself. "The only bad thing about the whole business is that it is 50 years overdue," one mine manager commented.

The experiment was inspired by the two constant forces that have controlled employment practices in the mines for years--the fixed price of gold and a shortage of skilled, white manpower. The motive of the mining companies in seeking to have more work done by Negroes is quite simple. White miners earn \$319 to \$420 a month. Black miners get \$15 to \$50!

The fixed price of gold makes it difficult for mine owners to meet competitive wage scales for whites during boom periods. It is estimated that there is a shortage of 2,000 white workers in the South African mines at the present time.

Mining work done by whites, legally defined as "competent scheduled persons," is entirely

VOICE READERS COMPRISE a \$30,000,000 MARKET

EDITORIAL

Rights Cause Demands Full-Time Application

BY ROY WILKINS

If the civil rights movement should go off on a foreign policy kick it will weaken its effectiveness in discharging its major responsibility here at home.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, driven by his great personal devotion to peace and nonviolence and, no doubt, by the advice of aides in the civil rights cause, has proposed that the United States withdraw from Vietnam and negotiate a peace.

At the present time the score is 2-to-1 against the King

(From the NEW YORK TIMES)

The New Solicitor General

It is impossible to consider the appointment of Judge Thurgood Marshall as Solicitor General apart from its symbolic aspects. He is a brilliant advocate and thoroughly qualified for the post. He is also a Negro.

At a time when Negroes are pressing for the last full measure of legal equality and some of the Federal district judges in the Deep South have been under attack from civil rights groups for their rulings, selection of the best-known Negro attorney as the Government's chief lawyer dramatizes the nation's commitment to equal rights.

Presumably, the fact that he will be the first Negro to hold this high office played a part in Judge Marshall's decision to give up the security and higher salary of the bench in order to take this more onerous post. It is doubtless his hope—as it is our expectation—that his service as Solicitor General will bring nearer the day when the appointment or election of Negroes to any position will be free of any special symbolic significance.

supervisory. All physical labor has long been performed by blacks. The black workers who have been "upgraded" are called "competent non-scheduled persons." They are allowed to do anything but handle explosives or lead a gang to a working face that has just been blasted open.

WHITES INVOLVED in the experiment earn more money because they are able to supervise more workers. It is doubtful if any of these whites took part in the demonstration at union headquarters in Johannesburg. The "rebels" apparently were from mines not included in the original experiment and probably were "egged on" by rabid segregationists in the ruling Nationalist party who have denounced the program as an encroachment on the principle of "job reservation," which may better be described as "legalized discrimination."

The government, as such, has yet to take a stand on the issue pending a study of the findings of its own investigative commission. However, no matter what the government decides, it will be faced by a potentially dangerous situation.

Mine managers say that if the government orders a return to the old system, production will be severely curtailed and result in a serious blow to the South African economy. On the other hand, if the government sanctions the new system and the white workers go through with their threat of a general strike, the result could be the same.

Just where it will all lead remains to be seen. Many delicate side issues are indirectly involved in the controversy. Regardless of how the government moves, that little-noticed "incident" at union headquarters in Johannesburg may well mark the beginning of the end for South Africa's apparently solidly-based, but actually precarious, prosperity.

And if widespread economic depression hits the predominantly colored population of South Africa, already long restless and sullenly resentful under the yoke of ruthless white subjugation, the mammoth blood-bath feared by many students of the explosive South African "situation" may come sooner than expected.

proposal. The 2,000 delegates to the NAACP convention did not consider such a resolution and several hundred CORE convention delegates finally voted against it. The National Urban League and SNCC are not yet recorded.

The argument that it will be futile for civil rights groups to struggle for equality if nuclear war is to be loose in the world can be made for the supporters of birth control or for the crusaders against air and water pollution, for those seeking wildlife and forest conservation, or for workers in a hundred other causes.

Under such reasoning, practically all human activity should cease unless allied with the peace movement.

Kibitzers Not Welcome

There are, of course, many kibitzers in the civil rights campaign whose No. 1 objective is not the attainment of the civil rights of Negro citizens. Nor do their hearts bleed for the Vietnamese. Nor do they hate colonialism in its pure form; they hate certain of those whom they label as practitioners.

And, too, Negro Americans should be wary of the race and color gambit. Last week I received a letter from an interested white person objecting to my belief that civil rights tasks in America should be separated from foreign policy in Vietnam. He concluded by asking my stand on "shooting my colored brother" in Asia.

In the broadest sense, all men are my brothers, but Premier Chou En-lai, for example, is no close relative. At least, he and his are not close enough for me to ease my fight here against racial bigotry in order to enter into a foreign policy matter that seems to be of more than passing interest to Communist China.

To tie a whole movement for domestic citizenship equality to the military operation in Vietnam strikes many people as a costly dissipation of energies and resources.

Plenty to Do Here

All over this land of ours, not in a faraway corner of Asia, there are 20 millions of Negro citizens, several millions of Spanish-Americans and numerous other deprived ones awaiting upgrading to better opportunities and richer lives in the world's richest country. By dint of strategy and sacrifice and struggle and suffering, both the moral and the practical arguments for equality have been driven home.

The three branches of our federal government have fashioned new tools to effect change, the voting bill passed by the House last week being the latest exhibit of concern. The three great religious faiths are diligently at work. The college students are fired and determined upon this issue. Finally, the Negro citizens themselves are at last aware and aroused.

It would be a tactical error at this crucial point to change course or to take on another objective. For us here, Selma is just as important as Saigon (or have we forgotten so quickly?). Hattiesburg is as much a challenge as Hanoi. Chicago and Boston school segregation is right under our noses. Racial unemployment and racial ghettos stare us in the face.

East Texas, central Louisiana, rural Georgia and the hinterlands of Alabama are closer than Cambodia. Besides, they contain our fellow citizens and our real relatives. Dilution of the civil rights drive is not in order.

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