

South Africa's voice

by Rajmohan Gandhi



Geneva

ATTERIDGEVILLE is a section of Pretoria. Here only black Africans may live. However, they may not be allowed to continue living there for long, for the Government has decided that Atteridgeville should become a white area.

In Atteridgeville lives and works Dr William Nkomo. He is 55, black, a medical doctor, an opponent of apartheid, a leader of his people and a fighter for a new South Africa and a new world. William Nkomo was the founder of the Youth League of the African National Congress. He was and is a militant warrior. In 1950 he met the force of Moral Re-Armament. Before long he became a close friend of Frank Buchman, the American-born initiator of MRA, who died in 1961.

Dr Nkomo has not been very well, but has been able to spend some days in Caux, the beautiful Swiss centre for Moral Re-Armament. When one heard him speak to the hundreds gathered from around the world and in private conversation, one felt the voice of South Africa speaking. In fact, one heard the conscience of an erratic humanity.

Dr Nkomo has a vision for the black men of Africa and also for all the races of South Africa.

"Africa," he said in a speech, "is a continent that God has kept in reserve, the continent whose hour has come. To many Westerners we are mere barbarians. But to people who see us through God's eyes, we are a team held in reserve for this time, when the world is at its extremity, when drugs and love of power and other things have so intoxicated modern man that he does not know whether he is coming or going.

"This is the moment when Africa should arise and give humanity a sense of direction once more. There is nothing complicated in the way of life which urges obedience to God's direction, and we can give that."

As for South Africa, Dr Nkomo said, "We can make South Africa into what Frank Buchman always thought of her, the sounding-board of the answer for the nations.

"I believe I was born to fight,

but I have not always fought the right battle. I believed that the only way to solve our problem in South Africa was to liquidate the white man. I saw 'The Forgotten Factor' (an MRA play).

"After I had seen it, my reaction was that more and more white men ought to see it. But soon I realised that we were not angels either. And I was much moved by young Afrikaners who had changed. I saw for the first time how small my commitment was. And I saw that instead of committing my life to fanning the flames of hatred in the hearts of young Africans and pledging ourselves to liquidate white people, we could under God together find a strategy for changing South Africa.

"I had to put certain things right at home. My wife and I began to sing together, 'There is a new song singing in my heart'. From that day I began to influence South Africa in a new way, together with my friends.

"People say to me, 'What can we do to liberate you?' Black men offer me guns and other support. The greatest thing Africans can do for South Africa is to live great and make a success of their hard-won independence."

Asians' role

In Dr Nkomo's view it will take a fighting partnership of all races inside South Africa, dedicated living by Africa's independent black nations, as well as the participation of Asians, Europeans and Americans for South Africa's problems to be solved. But he wants to be sure that the fight, dedication and participation, are for the greatest possible aim. He wants independent Africa to have more than money and economic development.

"We do need homes, we do need food, but when you have given people homes and food and education, you have not given them everything. I have seen men with all these things become rascals and sell their nations. People who buy positions, who fall for women, for liquor and for money, will lose their God-directed destiny."

He says that Asians have a part

in Africa's future. "Asians can be assets for the development of our country. We need Asians who come to our part of the world without motives of exploitation or of what they can get and who can demonstrate the true basis of peace and of democracy."

Speaking frankly about pornographic literature and films from Europe that "invade and infiltrate our part of the world" he said, "Some of us, still groping in the dark in Africa, get misled by the shining things of the West and lose our way. You in Europe have to think of Africa and the world."

The economic boycott of South Africa will not, in Dr Nkomo's opinion, help his people. "The very people you are trying to help, our people, will suffer," he said. He would like instead to see men of all races and nations engaged in a resolute and intelligent battle to alter South African attitudes.

On one occasion in Caux, Dr Nkomo asked two white South Africans, each distinguished and influential, to stand by his side on the platform and speak together. "I was driven," said Dr Nkomo, "to bloody revolution as the answer to our problem in South Africa, until I met men like George Daneel and Bremer Hofmeyr, who were changed. I decided that the only way to bring lasting change and peace to South Africa was not through bloody revolution, but through Moral Re-Armament.

"The Afrikaners are a people of strong moral integrity, but they need to know that South Africa is only a small part of the world. We have decided to bring to South Africa the greatest revolution we know. I say to these men that I am no longer going to allow bitterness and hatred to rule in my heart and that I shall for the rest of my life stand shoulder to shoulder with them to fight so that South Africa can become what God has as His plan.

"There are only two races in the world, those who live by the will of God and those who undermine God's will. We here are attempting to become members of the first race. If we do that, South Africa too can be a land of sunshine."