



# TORTURE AND PERSECUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

With the introduction of the 90-day Detention Law, in terms of the General Laws Amendment Act 1963, law itself was destroyed in Nazi South Africa. People have been taken into custody for successive terms of 90 days for questioning by members of the Security Police to obtain information from them about themselves or others in connection with alleged offences. Under this law, a detainee cannot have access to a lawyer and no access to the Courts. His relatives are not allowed to visit him. The detainee is the complete responsibility of the Minister of Justice, who, in this case, is the person who piloted the hideous bill through the White Parliament of South Africa.

With the operation of this Act, the Security Police have

become the SS men and the Gestapo of South Africa. Many people have been detained merely "to keep them out of the way", as stated by a police witness in the Rivonia trial. The Security Police are omnipotent and have their victims entirely at their mercy. The methods used by them to extract information have the ultimate aim of "breaking" the detainees. "It is not a very nice thing to see a human being broken. I have seen it . . . The man taking these powers must take the responsibility for them", said Mr. B. J. Vorster, Minister of Justice, during the debate in Parliament on the 90-day detention clause. However, his police have been given the go-ahead for the hideous and brutal breaking of any person it pleases them to detain.

All 90-day detainees are kept in solitary confinement throughout their period of detention and despite the fact that the Geneva Convention lays down 30 days as the maximum for solitary confinement, at least 60 people have been detained for more than 90 days and 8 persons, including 3 women, for more than 180 days. One man, Alfred Nze, was detained for 247 days before being released. Reading matter, other than the Bible, is denied them and they are kept in black painted cells with the light on all the time. Immediately the law came into operation, the Security Police used physical torture in addition to the mental torture of these prolonged periods of solitary confinement and interrogation. Reports smuggled out and evidence by affidavits of

former detainees alleged that African detainees were being subjected to electric shocks to make them "confess". They claimed that their heads were covered with sacks, while electrodes were attached to their fingers. As a result of this treatment Looksmart Ngudle committed suicide in his prison cell in September, 1963. After his death he was "banned" so that no statement made by him could be used publicly. In January 1964 Siphon James Tyitya also hanged himself in his cell to end the unendurable tortures to which he was subjected.

Ebrahim Siyanvala, a former 90-day detainee, was arrested for a traffic offence, but afraid that he was again being held under the 90-day Act, he escaped and was found drowned in a river. On September 9th, 1964, Suliman (Babla) Salojee

with the bomb incident at the Johannesburg Railway Station. He is being charged with murder and sabotage. His Council said they were not arguing that he was not fit to plead, but that he was in no condition to concentrate on any evidence placed before the Court. In an affidavit he alleged that he suffered a broken jaw while in detention and from reports reaching London it is alleged that both Harris and Hugh Lewin, another 90-day detainee and former features editor of the Johannesburg weekly newspaper "Golden City Post", were both assaulted by members of the Special Branch.

On October 2nd, 1964, final appeals were rejected in the cases of three men who have been convicted on 17 counts of sabotage. The 3 men, Vuyisile Mini, Zinakele Kaba, and Wilson Khayingo will be executed unless the President of the Republic of South Africa intercedes. Most of the witnesses called in the trials of these men had been 90-day no-trial detainees subject to long periods of solitary confinement and mental and physical torture. It is obvious that little value can be placed on the testimony of these broken and bedraggled witnesses.

World opinion has been stirred on the question of political prisoners in South Africa. In spite of the vote of the United Nations (when only South Africa voted against the resolution) calling for the abandonment of political trials and the release of political prisoners and in spite of all the pressures, the South African Government has not only completely disregarded world opinion, but in many ways she has increased her activities against her political opponents. The plight of political detainees and prisoners deserves the immediate and urgent attention of the people of Canada. Let us use whatever pressure is possible and take whatever action is necessary in order to ensure that the South African government stops its killings and maltreatment of political prisoners and detainees.

threw himself to his death from the seventh floor of the Security Police Headquarters in Johannesburg. Brigadier H. J. van den Bergh, chief of the Security Police, stated in connection with Mr. Salojee's death, "Yes, it is true, Salojee jumped". When asked whether it was true that the man was being interrogated when he jumped, Brigadier van den Bergh replied, "He must have been because he jumped from the Criminal Investigation Department's offices".

Many detainees have required psychiatric help after their release and at least 6 were so successfully "broken" that they were admitted to mental hospitals after their release. Mrs. Norma Kitson suffered severely from claustrophobia while in detention, feeling that the black-painted walls were closing in on her. Her screams and pleas bore no results and she attempted to commit suicide by cutting her wrists. At this stage she was sent to a mental hospital.

John Harris, champion of non-racial sport and Chairman of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee, was brought to Court after seven weeks under 90-day detention charged



## "LETTER TO MAMA-SOHN"

Dear and Venerable Mother,  
Your humble and obedient son writes to tell you of his experiences at university in this strange land to the east . . . of where you are. Here my eyes have beheld many wondrous things . . . and also many things which have set my poor brain into a veritable frenzy of bewilderment . . . so that, were I wearing the traditional pig-tail of our deified ancestors, it would be worn clear off through scratching miserable head.

It is November here, and the weather is becoming so cold that your dejected but loving son has taken to Saki. The natives of this land are also concerned about the atmospheric frigidty . . . but this worthless individual

is at a loss to explain why they refer to the intemperate temperatures as Japanese. My sage and revered mother will know that the island over which the sun rises has a warm climate, but the natives here persist in calling the weather "Nippy", which comment is made religiously every morning.

It is also to be noted that the advent of cold weather here is a signal for the natives to honour our ancient and delightful custom of smoking opium. Your upright offspring was unaware of this until the users of it declared themselves last week by wearing the opium flower on their lapel. Those who sell the flower of fruitful dreams are

called Chinese boatmen, or as we say . . . "junkies".

Although this sad and mournful son misses his home dearly, the item which distresses him most is being unable to go bathing with his family and friends. The baths in this land are so pitifully and lamentably tiny that one would be hard-pressed to bathe even with his parents. What is still more upsetting to your befuddled son is that I have met several friends whom I have invited to bathe with me. Two of these persons laughed at this wretch, while another offered to do me physical violence, and a fourth (a female) agreed to come, but misinterpreted the wholesome idea en-

tirely. My worldly parent will understand my unbounded delight when a group of natives invited me to go and bathe with them, only to be positively fragmented by their deplorably unsanitary practice of bathing with their clothes on! The bath itself consisted of a large pool of greenish water which smelled as if it hadn't been changed for days.

Your blushing and thimble-fingered son also informs his worthy mother that he has found a soul-mate. Her features are tiny and regular, her mind and complexion unblemished, her waist and ankles as slender and delicate as bean-sprouts, and her hair as shiny and red-smooth as burnished

copper. Ah ecstasy . . . My enlightened mother will be pleased to be informed that she has at least some Oriental colouration . . . in little spots scattered delightfully across her nose and forearms, put there by the honourable sun.

Your worshipping son must now go to sit on his high chair, to eat his meal and drink tea that is made from bags. Next time I will tell you of more wonders of the East . . . or West or whatever it is here. One more little fact for most honoured parent . . . the natives here have a curious slant to their eyes.

Your loving and humble son  
MAX

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