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contact

FOR UNITED NON-RACIAL ACTION

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POLITICAL TRIALS

COMMUNIST PARTY TRIALS

The preparatory examination of Mr Abram Fischer ended in Johannesburg on February 2.

Mr Fischer had been on trial in January 1965 with thirteen others charged under the Suppression of Communism Act when he had absconded. On November 11 of that year he was arrested wearing a heavy disguise.

At the beginning of the hearing, the prosecutor said that money for subversion in South Africa came through the Defence and Aid Fund, the Institute of Race Relations and Christian Action.(1) Mr Fischer, in a statement to the Court, denied that he was in any way connected with the orga-

nisations mentioned by the prosecution. (2)

Most of the inquiry was taken up with a disclosure of how Mr Fischer had spent his time from the date of his estreating his bail to the date of his capture in November, 1965.

Mr Fischer now faces fifteen charges. In the fifteenth and last count, relating to sabotage, he is accused of conspiring with others to recruit persons for instruction and training in the use of explosives for committing acts of violence and destruction and in the art of warfare, including guerrilla warfare and warfare generally for the purpose of causing a violent revolution in South Africa.

On count 1, Mr Fischer is accused of being a member of

the South African Communist Party. On count 2, of taking part in the party's unlawful activities by attending meetings of the party's central committee, issuing instructions, giving lectures and distributing Communist literature.

On counts 3 to 5, Mr Fischer is accused of distributing articles aimed at the establishment of a despotic government in South Africa based on the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Among the accusations made against him on count 6 are that he acted as a contact between the South African Communist Party and the overseas committee in London, and that he wrote letters to church leaders and advocated the making of contact with women, students and church organisations with the object of furthering the work of the party. The remainder of the counts relate to fraud, forgery and uttering arising from the alleged use of false names and of being in possession of a forged identity card and driver's licence.

(3)

PRISON ACT TRIALS

Judgement in the Strachan trial was given on January 27.

Mr Robert Harold Lundie Strachan was found guilty of publishing false information about prisoners in the Rand Daily

Mail and sentenced to a total of two and a half years' imprisonment on one count of perjury and two counts under the Prisons Act. Bail was fixed at R2,000 pending appeal, which has been set down for hearing in the Supreme Court, Maritzburg, on May 16. (4)

Mr Theron is still appearing in the Regional Court, Johannesburg, on 12 counts - two of having made false affidavits; two of publishing false information about prisons in the newspapers, or causing it to be published; two of inciting people to make false affidavits or false information or causing it to be published; three of illegally providing groceries to a prisoner; three of accepting money from a prisoner, his friends or his relatives. He has pleaded not guilty to all the charges. (5)

A charge against a Port Elizabeth physician and research scientist, Dr Geoffrey Dean, of publishing false information about South African prison conditions was withdrawn in the Cape Town Regional Court.

The charge arose from a letter written by Dr Dean and published in the South African Medical Journal in August, 1965.

During his research on porphyria, Dr Dean had come across certain 'suspicious deaths' which had prompted him to suggest that district surgeons should maintain their alertness and not relax their vigilance.

"His letter was written solely with this in mind and for no other purpose whatsoever," said the defending counsel. (6)

PAC TRIALS

One of the four men who appeared in the 'guerrilla warfare' trial, which ended in the Cape Town Criminal Sessions on February 4, was found not guilty of conspiring with others to recruit people in South Africa for training beyond the borders of the country in guerrilla warfare and sabotage. (7)

Three of the four were found guilty and sentenced between them to a total of 48 years in gaol.

Thirty-one Bellville convicts appeared in the Goodwood Regional Court on charges of participating in the activities of Poqo, a banned organisation. One of the accused complained

of being beaten with a length of hosepipe on the orders of the head warder. (8)

ANC TRIALS

Rank and file members of the banned ANC numbering 161, previously jailed for their membership of the organisation, are to appear on further charges under the Suppression of Communism Act. (9)

References:

- (1) Cape Argus, January 26
- (2) Cape Argus, February 2
- (3) Cape Argus, February 2
- (4) Cape Argus, January 27
- (5) Contact, January
- (6) Cape Times, February 4
- (7) Cape Times, February 5
- (8) Cape Argus, February 1
- (9) Cape Argus, February 19

180-DAY DETAINEES

On January 28, the Minister of Justice, Mr Vorster, said that 23 people had been detained to date under the 180-day clause of the Criminal Procedure Act. Four of them had been released. (1)

On the 27th, five more people were held under the clause. That brought the total to 28. (2)

Of those detained, the names of twenty-four detai-

nees are known to us. They are: Mrs Violet Weinberg; Miss Doreen Tucker, who gave evidence in the Fischer trial; Mrs Lesley Schermbrucker, who was sent to gaol for 300 days for refusing to give evidence in the trial of Mr Abram Fischer; Mr Issy Dinat; Mr Isaac Heymann, who was imprisoned for refusing to give evidence in the trial of Mr Shedrack Tangala and others; Mrs Clarice First, who was released; Mrs R. Milindton, who was released; Mr Noothi Naidoo; Mr First; Miss Chloe Gama; (3) Mr Fred Carneson, who has been charged under the Suppression of Communism Act; Mrs Caroline de Crespigny; Mrs Brenda Mercurio, who had been released from custody; Mr Solli Malindi; Mr Jack Mpundu; Mr Simon Egert; Mr Eric Flegg; Mr Alfred Aronstam; Mr Gordon Winter, a reporter of the Sunday Express wanted for evidence in the Bradbury trial; (4) Mr Albert Sachs; Mr Bernard Gosschalk; Miss Gillian Jewell; Miss Amy Rietstein; and Mr Alex la Guma. (5)

HOUSE-ARREST

The following people have been placed under house arrest: Mr Isaiah Stein, who was last year banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, was placed under 24-hour house arrest; Mr Mogamat Taufie

Bardien, who was recently released from gaol, was placed under 12-hour house arrest; (6) Mr Ahmad Osman, who was placed under 12-hour house-arrest; and Mrs Mary Benson, who has been served with an order restricting her movements (7); and Helen Joseph, who has had her banning order extended. (8)

BANNED

Mr Dennis Wessels has been served with a banning order restricting him to the magisterial district of Wynberg. He is awaiting an appeal against a sentence for refusing to give evidence in two court cases. (9)

Also banned are: Ngqukuva Makata, Thuse Majalla Moerane, Magdeline Mtsweni, and John Tseke Phahlamohlata. (10)

References:

1. Cape Times, January 29
2. Cape Times, January 28
3. Contact, December, 1965
4. Contact, January, 1965
5. Cape Times, January 28
6. Cape Times, January 29
Cape Times, February 5
7. Cape Times, February 16
8. Cape Times, February 26
9. Cape Times, February 22
10. Cape Times, March 5

DISTRICT SIX PROTEST
MEETING

The heart of District 6 has been declared a White Group Area under the Group Areas Act. This area has been traditionally the home of the Coloured people, who will now probably be moved to a remote area on the Cape Flats far from Cape Town, where most of them work.

On Monday, February 21, 1,500 people, including the Security Police, attended a protest meeting in Cape Town's old Drill Hall.

The multi-racial gathering adopted a resolution describing the proclamation of District 6 for the White group as callous in its disregard of the welfare, sentiments and interests of the residents of the area; contrary to the wishes of the majority of the citizens of the city; against the weight of considerable expert advice; and offensive to the religious conviction of people of all faiths.

It called on the Government to withdraw the proclamation and on the Cape Town City Council to make the necessary representations accordingly.

Among the apologies for absence was one from the former

Chief Justice of South Africa, Mr A. van de S. Centlivres, who said:

"I earnestly hope that this meeting will demonstrate to the Government in no uncertain terms the utter horror felt by the citizens of Cape Town at the recent proclamation declaring the heart of District Six to be a White group area in spite of the fact that the area has for generations been the home of our Coloured fellow-citizens."

The first speaker, Mr A. H. Honikman, a former Mayor of Cape Town, said no single act seemed to demonstrate more vividly the shallowness of the Government's claim that it was its function to preserve civilised standards than the declaration of District Six as a White area.

"This declaration is one which not only affects thousands of citizens who live in that area but affects us all," he said.

"During the past few days many people have felt a sense of deep concern and shame - have wondered if they dare assert their right to protest.

"To those who waver let me say that no citizen of Cape Town who takes pride in the inter-racial cordia-

lity and goodwill which characterises life in this city can sit back in silence at this critical moment and call his soul his own."

Mr Honikman, who said he was not representing the City Council or any political party, recalled the pledge he had made four and a half years ago, undertaking to do all in his power to produce a practical scheme for urban rehabilitation.

He said that eventually, after delays, the council scheme for District Six was approved by the Government.

"Hope and meaning were brought into the lives of children who were born in squalor and had no place to play but in the crime-ridden shadows of the oldest and foulest slum in our country," he said.

"Since then two-and-a-half years had passed and the outcome of it all was not a plan for better living conditions but a declaration that the area was to be White - "a declaration bristling with evil potential".

The Rev. Basil Brown, of the Christian Council of South Africa, expressed "deep concern" of the churches at the proclamation and protested at the "further invasion of the rights and liberties of many citizens".

Sheik Naziem Mohammed spoke

of the "drastic" effects the declaration would have on the three mosques in District Six, while Mrs Mary Stoy, of the National Council of Women, spoke from the point of view of women and mothers.

The last speaker was Mr Norman Daniels, described as one of the countless respectable citizens born in District Six.

He spoke of the "shock and unhappiness" of the people now that District Six was to be taken away from them - something they had feared when they had seen what had happened to other Coloured people moved out of areas where they had lived and worked.

long view by

ALAN PATON

THE LONG ARM OF PERSECUTION

When this is published, or soon after, Walter and Adelain Hain and their children, Ann Harris and her small son, Ann Tobias, and Maritz van den Berg will have left South Africa to make a new home for themselves in Europe.

The Hains are going because Walter Hain, an architect, can no longer make a living in this country. Ann Harris is going because her son's future is her paramount consideration. Ann Totias is going because she is the kind of young woman who must have a purpose to live for and the freedom to work for it, and finds life without them intolerable. Maritz van den Berg, a future architect, is going because his difficulties are much the same as those of Walter Hain.

There will not be a Liberal in the country who will presume to judge any of these, their colleagues and ex-colleagues, for their decision to leave their country. The

Liberal Party has cause to be grateful to them for their work, and to admire them for their courage. We all wish for them that they find a use for their talents and a purpose for their lives, for that achievement after all is the nearest we get to happiness.

Why are they going? I have already given the immediate reasons. The antecedent reasons are that these Liberals challenged the Nationalist policies of apartheid and separate development, that they did not observe the ruling customs of apartheid either in their own lives or in the work of the Party, and that the Government with its almost absolute powers so confined and restricted them that their lives became intolerable. That the creation of this intolerableness was as much the purpose of the ban as was the restriction can hardly be doubted. Nor

can it be doubted that the making of life intolerable is one of the duties of the security police.

The Government has been cleared by the courts of the charge that its prisons are cruel, but history will have no doubt as to its cruelty towards its political opponents (and in these I do not include the United Party, nor as yet the Progressives). Many of these opponents broke laws, notably those relating to the continuance of their political activities after these had been declared unlawful. The punishment for these offences goes far beyond anything that can be called just. But what is worse, persons are charged, say, with the offence of carrying on the work of a banned political organisation, and when they emerge after long prison sentences are charged with some second offence, such as collecting funds for a banned political organisation. This is not the long arm of the law, it is the long arm of persecution. At no time in the history of the Nationalist struggle were its fighters subjected to such insatiable vengeance.

While it is not an offence to charge the Government and

its laws with cruelty, it is regarded by many white South Africans as an act of treachery. They hold a kind of belief that if cruelty is bad, to denounce it publicly is worse. It is to me a fact of great significance that more than once recently, when anyone protests, or begins to protest against some abuse of power, a statement is issued warning people against perjury. And the chances are that if you make a hundred charges, and can only substantiate ninety-eight of them, that is exactly what you will be found guilty of.

The majority of white South Africans have no longer any protest to make against the inhuman powers that are used in the defence of law and order. Some of these people are of the kind that likes to see its enemies persecuted. Some are of the kind that so fear authority that they would never dare to criticise it. And yet others don't like being left out in the cold; they see the band-wagon driving past, with its noise and blare, and want to get on it as fast as possible. It is a human failing to want to belong, not to a party with principles, but to a party with power.

Who is mad? This white South African majority, or myself?

I like to think it is not myself, or the Hains and their fellow-victims. Whatever attraction there may be in separate development (and the fall of Nkrumah has done nothing to lessen this attraction), it cannot be carried out without cruelty. This cruelty is called petty apartheid, but there is nothing petty about it. It is unspeakable. And it is applied, not only to the unenfranchised and the disenfranchised, but to the enfranchised who oppose it.

May the day come when the Hains and our other friends can return to us, to help in the building of the non-racial and democratic society in which we most profoundly believe.

HIS PATIENCE IS EXHAUSTED

No doubt the desire of the Cape Town Students' Conservative Association to entrench the Whiteness of its membership strikes a very sympathetic chord in the breast of the Minister for Education, Arts and Science; but his outburst in support of its claims is nevertheless extraordinary. For one thing, there is the unrestrained emotion of his tone. Some of the language he uses - with phrases like 'unbridled liberalism' - would be almost comic if it were not so nastily reminiscent of the carpet-tearing fulminations of late unlamented European dictators; and his proposal to reconsider the whole position of open universities if his wishes are not acceded to is an ugly kind of blackmail.

The fact is that this is an internal University matter. Surely it is the business of the S.R.C. to determine which societies it will and will not register. The regulation which the Conservative Association demands that it waive is a very old one, established in the open universities long before Conservative Associations were ever thought of. -

namely, that all registered societies must be open to all students. This has always been accepted even by societies whose interests were entirely sectional - for instance, bodies like the Students' Anglican Societies have been able to flourish for years in spite of being prohibited from excluding atheists or Jews. Only the Conservative Associations, confident, no doubt, of their strength in riding the contemporary ideological bandwagon, have raised their voices in vociferous protest. One wonders whether their conservatism is unbridled enough for them to be gratified by the Minister's threats on their behalf, or whether they are not perhaps a little embarrassed at having their cause advanced by so loud a stamping of the jackboot.

For their part, the S.R.C. and its supporters are fighting a gallant rearguard action in defence of a just and reasonable principle: that people who pay out equal sums

should receive equal services in return. Thus since all students pay an equal levy to the S.R.C., they must all have equal access to societies or other amenities provided, sponsored or subsidised by the S.R.C. This seems elementary enough; but the principle is much neglected in South Africa. There is a great tendency to regard a coin tendered by a brown hand as entitled to less return than the same coin tendered by a white. There are of course always sharp business men who will exploit poverty and ignorance - who will sell Africans bruised fruit and stale bread - but this attitude is extended and given official sanction by, for instance, municipalities who use rates paid by non-White citizens to subsidise City Orchestras which they never hear, or to maintain halls, parks and swimming baths which they are not allowed to enter. It is convenient for White South

Africans to close their eyes to the blatant fraudulence of this kind of proceeding, and perhaps this is a reason for the Minister's anger. In a

society as selfish and hypocritical as ours, moral punctiliousness, demonstrated even by just a few hundred students, can be intolerably uncomfortable.

Some Interesting Quotes

From THE NATAL MERCURY, Durban, February 23, 1966

Race Relations in South Africa were improving almost by the day.

Dr Carel de Wet.

Our new nation, with its own Government, is complete master in its own house.

Kaiser Matanzima, Chief Minister of the Transkei.

I would suggest that people whose sentimental ideas turn them into champions of the oppressed (I personally

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" haven't seen any in this country), take a little trip to one of the so-called "liberated" Black countries.

Letter from reader.

From THE SUNDAY TIMES, February 27, 1966.

I believe that the Kaffir is a savage and is incapable of accepting Western political forms. It is our duty to our children and to the generations yet unborn to ensure for them a White future.

Ex-Sgt. Arlow, speaking in Pretoria on Sat. 26 February.

My relatives and friends have always known that the British Labour Party is in reality nothing more than the Communist Party of Britain.

Letter from reader.