

into prisons, like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and now Bram Fischer.

BRAM FISCHER

The arrest of Bram Fischer by the Security Police last November represents not only a personal tragedy for a great man but a serious setback for the whole liberation movement.

When, in January 1965, Bram Fischer 'jumped' bail while on a charge of belonging to and furthering the aims of the illegal Communist Party, he wrote: 'My decision was made only because I believe it is the duty of every true opponent of the Government to remain in this country and to oppose its monstrous policy of apartheid with every means in its power. That is what I shall do for as long as I can'.

For ten months while he was in hiding he was a symbol of resistance to the evil regime of the Nationalist Party. In the letter he had left after going underground, he had written: 'If, in my fight, I can encourage even some people to think about, to understand and to abandon the policies they now so blindly follow, I shall not regret any punishment I may incur'.

He had in mind particularly his fellow-Afrikaners. To try to avoid the appalling bloodshed and civil war that might overtake the country unless the policy of apartheid was abandoned was, he said, 'a supreme duty, particularly for an Afrikaner, because it is largely the representatives of my fellow-Afrikaners who have been responsible for the worst of these discriminatory laws'.

Though the Bar Council, instigated by toadies who at one time were proud enough to number Bram Fischer amongst their 'friends', immediately took steps which resulted in his being struck off the roll, there is no doubt Bram's action won the deep sympathy of thousands of ordinary white South Africans sick to death of living with the guilt of apartheid on their minds yet afraid to take the practical steps which are necessary to end it. We have received reports of Whites, in no way involved in politics, who wept openly at the news that Bram had been captured. The growing number of Whites who are today moved, as much by the increasing brutality of the Verwoerd regime as by the apparent apathy of the White community as a whole, to make a stand, often a sacrifice, against apartheid, must certainly have been inspired by his example, even if they did not share all his ideals.

As for the non-Whites, no more handsome tribute could be paid than that of the African National Congress, whose journal

Spotlight, in an editorial, stated on November 19th, after learning of his re-arrest:

It was in (the) revolutionary cause of the oppressed people that Bram Fischer entered and selflessly devoted his life, energy and legal career . . . Bram spared no effort in organising other people to join the struggle for freedom, independence and human dignity in South Africa. His personal integrity has been admitted even by those who sought to disbar him from his profession as an advocate. His brilliant advocacy in defence of such patriots as Mandela and Sisulu will remain a monument of devotion to liberty and brotherhood. This self-effacing, amiable and determined revolutionary has become a legend in his lifetime owing to his loyalty and devotion to the cause of liberation in South Africa.

Many biographical articles and tributes to Bram Fischer have appeared since his arrest. The main details of his life and background are by now well known—his illustrious ancestry, his brilliant career at the bar. But we take pride, especially, in a fact which has been overlooked by many—that until its dissolution in 1950, Bram Fischer was a member of the Communist Party of South Africa, whose theoretical standpoint and practical action formed the framework for his own many-sided work as a lawyer, politician and man.

Those who were his comrades in many a campaign can never forget the contribution which he made—his wisdom, his patience, his willingness to undertake the most humdrum as well as the most important tasks, his steadfastness in a crisis, his unwavering confidence in the future. Bram is not the misguided 'do-gooder' that he had been made out to be in some sections of the press. What he did, he did with a sense of absolute conviction and dedication, believing it was in the best interests of his country and its people. If he has been moved to throw away his career as a result of his political work, it was not because he desired martyrdom, or indeed for any personal reason, but because he took a calculated risk for a plainly political purpose. He found apartheid intolerable, he studied and organized with others the best means of bringing it to an end and substituting for it a society which would abolish discrimination and usher in an era of justice, freedom and equality for all. In Verwoerd's South Africa, such activities are illegal and dangerous. Since 1948, the political climate has become steadily more menacing and hostile for the political reformer. Legal methods of struggle have one by one been outlawed, and laws placed on the statute book providing the most savage penalties for those rash or courageous enough to undertake political work. Bram was anything but rash. That he finds himself in the dock today, threatened with as yet

unspecified charges, possible conviction and years of imprisonment, is a tribute not only to the man who did not flinch from doing his duty, but also to the cause which in the first place attracted a man of his calibre and idealism.

Though arrest and trial have come as no surprise to Bram, they will undoubtedly constitute for him, no longer in the best of health, a grievous strain. Life has already dealt harshly with him—he has lost his dear wife and comrade Molly, his home and career have been broken up, his youngest son Paul lies ill in hospital, he himself, once a successful lawyer, is penniless. Like thousands of others of all races in South Africa, he who has given everything to the cause, now stands in need of every support it can offer him. His trial, just as his whole life, is not a personal matter, but something which must be shared by all his comrades. We have no doubt that Bram will turn the tables on his accusers, and place in the dock the hateful regime which has dared to indict him—a man regarded and described even by his enemies as ‘a saint’. He will regard his trial merely as another field of battle where he can still continue the relentless struggle against his adversaries.

Now is the time for the South African liberation movement and its allies in every country to come to the assistance of Bram Fischer and the cause to which he has devoted his life. Every effort must be made to demonstrate the solidarity of the whole civilized world with a man who personifies all that is humane, noble and dignified in human relations as against the beastliness and barbarism of those who rule South Africa today. We can expect the Nationalist regime and its army of paid spies, thugs, informers and prosecutors to heap every possible infamy on the head of this man and his associates in what promises to be a ‘show’ trial. The prosecution will press for the harshest possible sentence. Only the pressure of public opinion inside and outside South Africa can save Bram Fischer from the worst injury his enemies will try to inflict on him.

THE SUDANESE COMMUNISTS

As now in Nigeria, so four years ago the corruption, disunity and failure to provide for the needs of the masses in the Sudan of the reactionary Parliamentary parties paved the way for the Aboud military dictatorship to seize power. It proved even more incompetent to solve the country's problems, following neo-colonialist policies at home and abroad and stifling the freedom of speech, organization and the press.

After a hard struggle, in which a leading part was played by the urban working class and students of Khartoum and other cities, the Aboud