

## PERSECUTION UNDER APARTHEID LAWS IN SOUTH AFRICA

What happens in South Africa may seem of little concern to us in Canada. Some may have heard of the Rivonia trial two years ago, when Nelson Mandela and several others who oppose the Nationalist regime, were condemned to life imprisonment. A much less publicised case - though it is well-known in West Germany - was that of young Dr. Alexander and his ten associates who were convicted in the same year under the "Sabotage Act," in spite of the fact that no act of sabotage was proven against them. With more than a thousand other political prisoners, Neville Alexander faces ten years of the brutalities of Robben Island jail. The latest news (London Observer, June 6) reports him to be an inmate of the special "punishment block," where brutish guards practise the refinements of their inhuman treatment on prisoners whose spirit refuses to be cowed. Alexander had dared to protest against the gross humiliation of examination by guards when the prisoners return each day from the quarries on the island.

The fact is that the arrest, trial and conviction of the Alexander Eleven pin-points the police-state of South Africa. In 1963, the International Commission of jurists stated: "Anyone who doubts that South Africa has become a police state, should examine its laws. The question is then no longer in doubt." This deprivation of civil and legal rights - indeed of all human rights - perpetrated by the Nationalist regime of South Africa first and foremost against the non-White majority of the population, but increasingly also against those Whites who dare to raise their voices against Apartheid policies, is an aspect of the situation that should be of the deepest concern to all those who believe in the values of true democracy for which men have fought in the past, and continue to fight, and who know that a perpetual vigilance is necessary to safeguard it.

When, in 1948, the white electorate voted the Afrikaner Nationalists (of Boer descent) into power, racism was invested with divine sanction and what was already an economic policy of long-standing was exalted into an overt State policy. South Africa is thus out of step with the whole ~~mainstream~~ ~~Western~~ ~~today~~ tendency in the West to-day, where governments, even when not zealous opponents of racism,

at least do not openly sanction it.

Dr. Malan, the first Nationalist Prime Minister, declared: "We have a Divine Right to be Afrikaners." And he perceived in their history "the highest work of art of the (Divine) Architect." More realistically, his successor, J.G.Strijdom, stated: "If we reject the Herrenvolk (master-race) idea, how can the Europeans (South African Whites) remain Baas - master?"

Government policy has deprived non-Whites completely of democratic rights; racial laws impose low wages, segregated housing, segregated schooling, the monstrosity of "Bantu Education" for Africans. And all this makes up a picture of human suffering and frustration that is a discredit to a nation that claims to be Christian. But it is something more that moved the International Commission of Jurists to express themselves so forcefully concerning a police state.

It is the laws which seek to sweep away the ~~rule~~<sup>rule</sup> of law, which abolish the right of habeous corpus, which deprive the individual of the last vestige of legal protection, that create a deep uneasiness wherever men still uphold freedom.

The laws on which Neville Alexander and his ten young companions were impaled bring home the gravity of the attack on human rights. In July, 1963, the Eleven were summarily arrested without warrant and detained, without charges, under the provisions of Section 17 of the General Law Amendment Act of 1963, the notorious 90-Day Detention clause. They were kept for the three months in solitary confinement for the purpose of "interrogation" and several of the arrested men reported the brutality of the methods employed. The law also permits the detention of a man for "indefinitely renewable" periods of 90 days.

In November, 1963, the Alexander Eleven were charged before the Cape Division of the Supreme Court with violations of the General Law Amendment Act of 1962, known as the "Sabotage Act," and also of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. "Sabotage" covers an extraordinarily wide range of offences, including ~~the~~ encouraging ~~of~~ the achievement of any social, economic or political change. The minimum penalty is five years and the maximum is death. The charge of "Communism" is likewise stretched to cover opinions opposed to Apartheid policies, so that a noted anti-Communist has been so-charged.



including robbery; it also forbids the release on bail of an accused, not only in cases of subversion, but any designated offence. It also renews what is known as the "Sobukwe" clause. This empowers the Minister to detain certain prisoners after they have served their full sentences. Robert Sobukwe, who, in 1960, led a passive resistance campaign against the carrying of passes by Africans - which resulted in the Sharpeville massacre - has been confined in Robben Island since the end of his three year sentence.

The believers in the racist creed of the master-race seem unable to arrest their attack on democratic and human rights.

<sup>one of the reasons</sup>  
That is) why public-spirited men and women have lent the prestige and authority of their names as sponsors of the ~~various~~ ~~British~~ various Alexander Defence Committees. The Committees are the active symbol of the rejection of racism, with all the inhumanity and injustice that it breeds. In Britain the sponsors include Bertrand Russell, Frank Allaun, M.P., S. Silverman, M.P., C.L.R. James, a noted author, as well as professors and trade union leaders. Among the fifty sponsors of the U.S. Committee are eminent scientists and writers, such as : Linus Pauling, Prof. Reinhold Niebur, John O. Killens, Rev. A.J. Muste and James Foreman.

The new Canadian Alexander Defence Committee includes Northrop Frye, ~~an~~ internationally known literary critic and author; Fred Stinson, Q.C. and ex-M.P., a founder of Canadian University Services Overseas (C.U.S.O.); Professor Blumenfeld, the well-known townplanner; Professor Robin S. Harris, Principal of Innis College, University of Toronto; Austin Clarke, author of the novel: "Survivors at the Crossing"; Abraham Feinberg, rabbi emeritus of Holy Blossom Temple, vice-president of the Association for Civil Liberties.