

DESCOM BULLETIN.

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Botha's Deal needs policing

Since 1976, the Nationalist government has faced a growing crisis in South Africa. There have been deep economic and financial problems, splits in the ranks of the ruling party, and above all, massive popular resistance, waves of strikes, rent boycotts, bus boycotts, school boycotts, the anti-SAIC campaign, stay-at-homes. Faced with this growing opposition, the government has introduced certain reforms. Since the solution of "one person, one vote" is out of the question, it has attempted to make "ethnic pluralism" look more attractive. It has encouraged more investment in the "homelands", given more powers to community councils, and the South African Indian Council, and most important of all, set up the President's Council. All the P.C. members were nominated by the government and there are no African representatives on it at all. The P.C. proposals involve a change in the South African constitution. The State President will have much greater power, and there will be 3 new parliaments: one for whites, one for Indians, one for Coloureds. The government is attempting to channel political aspirations into these ethnic structures, by "buying off" certain sections of black people, by trying to give them a stake in the system. Some sections WILL be bought off. For example, the Labour Party recently decided to participate in the "new deal". Yet the government knows that there will be massive opposition from the majority of South Africans - and so repression will always be used to silence their leaders. Bannings, detentions, breaking strikes with force, ruthless influx control - all these remain. During the last few years of Botha's reform, NOT ONE of the vicious pieces of legislation on the statute books has been removed. As the government tries to overcome the crisis facing it, there will be more "new deals" in future - and the last line of defence will always be more repression.

A Short Reply

Dr. David Webster of the Johannesburg DPSC has called the Minister of Law and Order, Mr. Louis le Grange, a bully for making unsubstantiated accusation against Descom and the DPSC. The Minister said that they are a support organisation for the communists and the ANC. At a meeting in Johannesburg Dr. Webster echoed the feelings of the Durban committee when he said, "We reject with contempt every allegation he made. We are angered by this, and by his refusal to listen to our evidence of police abuses."



Time is longer than rope

A nationwide appeal for clemency to be granted to 6 young South Africans, sentenced to hang, is gaining momentum. A similar appeal was launched last year for three political prisoners. In their case clemency was granted after internal and international pressure was brought to bear on the government.

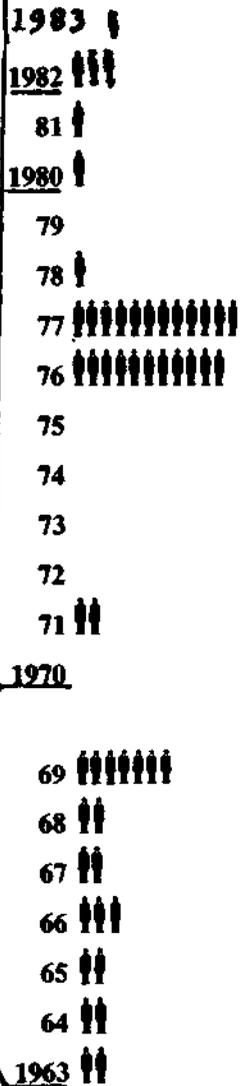
The use of capital punishment in South Africa is generally excessive. Why then should we make a special demand for the lives of these young men to be spared? One reason is that such clemency has been shown before in South African history. For example, members of the Nationalist party benefited from the mercy shown to them after they had collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II.

Another reason is that ever since the hanging of Solomon Mahlangu in 1979 there has been an increase in the use of the death penalty for political offenders. Descom believes that this is a time of political crisis in South Africa and that the use of the hangman's noose to solve social and political problems can only compound those problems.

DESCOM CALLS ON ALL CONCERNED SOUTH AFRICANS TO WRITE TO THE NEWSPAPERS AND THE STATE PRESIDENT URGING THAT CLEMENCY BE GRANTED TO SIX DEATH ROW POLITICAL PRISONERS. THEIR NAMES ARE:

- ATHONY TSOTSOBE
- JOHANNES SHABANGU
- DAVID MOISE
- SIMON MOGOERANE
- JERRY MOSOLOLI
- MARCUS MOTAUNG

Deaths in Detention



UCT research

The Institute of Criminology at the University of Cape Town has undertaken a research project on detentions. One full-time researcher has been employed for 1983 to start the project. The aims of the project are to collect information on detentions in South Africa from a wide range of perspectives such as legal, historical, sociological and psychological aspects. By examining this information the project will focus on areas that need further research and hopefully start such research. Part of the task of the project will be to co-ordinate segments of the research and publications related to detentions and particularly research initiated by the various Detainee Support Committees round the country.



The Psychology of Detention

The next few editions of Descom Bulletin will be publishing a series of short articles which try to deal with the more personal and individual aspects of being detained in South Africa. While these articles will focus on certain psychological dimensions of detentions it is important to bear in mind that detentions are primarily a political and socio-economic reality in South Africa and cannot be understood outside of this context. In this first article we look at the detention situation itself:

The detention situation will be alien to the person being detained for a number of reasons. Some of these will be social, some personal, others political.

The detention situation is usually a solitary confinement situation so that the person will be immediately deprived of important social and interpersonal contact.

The people that the detainee has contact with will usually only be the security police, prison warders, and other officers of the State. By the fact that the person has been detained in the first place it follows that such people will not be the detainee's choice of associations, and they will be seen negatively and treated with hostility by the detainee.

Besides the personal and social isolation of the detention situation, there is also the material, physical and environmental isolation and deprivation.

The extent of the experience of such deprivation will depend on the detainees' socio-economic background. Obviously middle-class detainees (students, intellectuals, etc.) will feel the material deprivation more than working-class detainees. But whatever the social class, sex, colour/race, or other factors of the detainee's background, we can be sure that most detainees are going to find the situation alien, unpleasant, and that it will take some time to adjust to this 'new' situation.

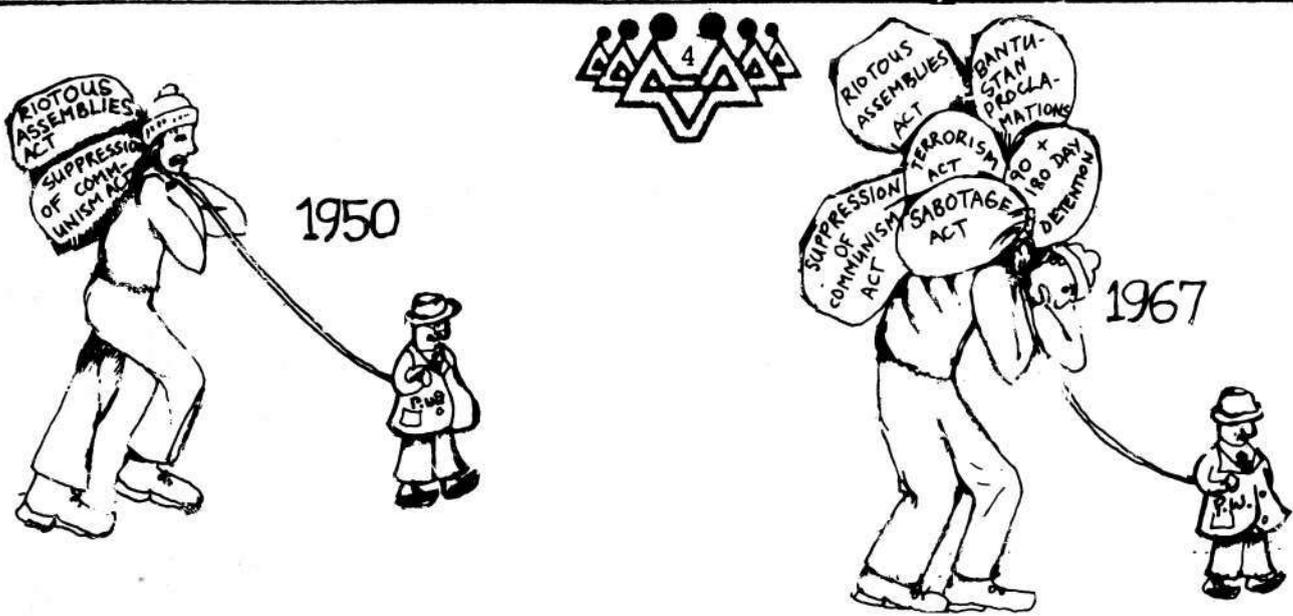
How individual detainees adjust will vary from person to person, with some people seeming to be little affected by the whole experience in any significant way and simply carrying on where they left off before their detention, while others seem to have broken down emotionally.

Some of how a person deals with detention will depend on what kind of person they were before detention -- how they normally responded to stressful situations, and most importantly, their political commitment and involvement.

It seems that people with very clear and active political involvements are able to withstand quite a lot more of the detention interrogation situation than people who only have some slight political association.

Recently (end of 1981) a number of people were detained simply because they were friends of politically active people or detainees. One final thing that needs to be said about the detention situation is the treatment the detainee receives from the security police and other state officials.

According to the Minister of Police, the police are not meant to use 'unacceptable' or 'unorthodox' methods in detention and in their interrogation procedures. Since these activities occur in secret, the whole point of detention in some respects, there is no public monitoring of what the police do.



Detention news

Ms Mogina Makhosi Shezi (26) and her brother Mr Nobleman Mthokozisi Shezi (18) were detained on the night of 18 December 1982. Relatives were aware of their detention from the beginning. However, despite the fact that the press had been in possession of the two detainees' names since December, they were unable to get confirmation of their detention until last week. The security police have clearly felt that it is no longer their responsibility to inform the public of the names of detained people. No relatives have been allowed access to them and sources close to the family say that only a change of clothing has been allowed into them by the police in Durban.

As yet, police have given no reason for the detentions, and have not disclosed under which section of the security laws the detainees are being held.

Death

The news of the latest death in detention has just reached the committee. We would like to extend our deepest sympathies to the relatives of Tembuyise Simon Mndawe.

