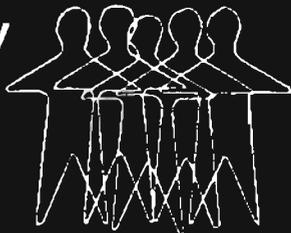


The New African



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Cages in Windhoek

—JOHN CLARE

Back to "Normal"

—PETER MOTSOANE

BESSIE HEAD

LEWIS NKOSI

HOWARD LAWRENCE

In this issue:

- 98 MID-1964 SOUTH AFRICA: Peter Motsoane
 - 100 SNOWBALL, A STORY: Bessie Head
 - 102 MARXISM THROUGH AFRICAN EYES, 2: B. D. G. Folson
 - 105 JAZZ EPISTLES: Howard Lawrence
 - 108 CAGES IN WINDHOEK: John Clare
 - 115 RIVONIA NOTEBOOK: Elizabeth Wilson
 - 117 MY FIRST FIVE YEARS, 2: J. Amie

 - 104 Poem, David Gill, 106, 110, 112 Reviews, John Clare, J. F. Leslie, Lewis Nkosi, 113 Africana, 114 Two Poems, Mbella Sonne Dipoko, 116 Words, Words, Words, 120 To the Editor
-

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THE NEW AFRICAN P.O. BOX 2068 CAPE TOWN

Dear Chief Luthuli

WE WRITE TO OFFER YOU our sympathy on the occasion of the extension of your banning order for a further five years, with the imposition of harsher conditions than before. We need not emphasise the fact with which you must for the past five years continually have consoled yourself that the Government's actions against you reveal their own state of fear and their estimate of the influence you have over those thousands of South Africans whose elected leader you are.

Many people must have told you when you were first banned that freedom would come within that five-year period, and we will not yield to the temptation of wishful-thinking by assuring you that your second banning period will not run itself out, that freedom will come during the five years that face you now. It may not, though the process towards freedom must continue as it has already begun. There can be no certainty that 1969 will not find you still a virtual prisoner at Groutville.

What we wish to express to you, however, is our conviction that by your continued silent and confined presence among us you are still serving South Africa with the distinction which brought to us the honour of your receiving of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1962, and the benefits of the work that won you that prize. *The time may come in the five years ahead when you will be called into active affairs again.* Those who hope and work for as near peaceful an end to race domination as possible know that a time may come for negotiation, that we all may be glad of your presence in South Africa should the Government be forced into consultation with representatives of the oppressed millions. Your own unshakeable convictions, expressed in your writings and remembered from your speeches, continue to circulate in South Africa, and their validity grows more certain as each year of your unjust confinement passes and you are known to hold fast.

We know that you would not want your new banning order to be written of here without reference to the treatment of another great leader, Mr. R. M. Sobukwe. Also without charge, trial or appeal he is to be held for a further year as a prisoner on Robben Island. We do not yet know whether his request for an "exit permit" to leave South Africa permanently, for the duration of the present regime, that is, will be acceded to or not. We cannot write to him as we are doing to you without knowing the answer, nor would we want to say anything about his decision to apply for an exit permit while his goaler, the Hon. B. J. Vorster, is considering it. We merely wish here to extend to Mr. Sobukwe, his family, and his followers, our sympathy and to salute him for the dignity and resolution with which he has so far borne his imprisonment.

We regret, as we are sure do you and he, that you lead separate and still hostile groups of followers. The continued mutual rancour among too many of your and his lieutenants here and abroad, is wasteful, unnecessary and a great blessing to the regime that both factions are trying to defeat. Furthermore, it is an insult to the

Continued overleaf

Back to "Normal"

Some glances at mid-1964 South Africa

PETER MOTSOANE

EASTER, A PERIOD USUALLY MARKED by racial tension and bitterness; unpalatable parliamentary debates on more restrictive legislation for Africans, saw the first quarter of 1964 pass amidst a climate of uneasy calm, as if everybody was happy under apartheid; as if "relations between whites and blacks have never been better", to quote a famous phrase from Mr. De Wet Nel, B.A.D. Minister.

For it was about Easter 1960 that we experienced the horror of Sharpeville shootings and the State of Emergency. It was during Easter, 1963, that the Poqo suspects were rounded up and 90-day detention became a feature of South African "traditional way of life". In other years, other Easters were marked by strikes, boycotts and demonstrations against passes and other aspects of apartheid.

The police can boast of having smashed "sabotage gangs" and "their satellites" and also having "agitators" (patriotic African leaders like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki) behind bars. Some leaders are banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. Some have fled.

But the police can't boast of having won over to apartheid the hearts of the millions of Africans who loathe oppression. For the legacies that cause bitterness and racial hatred amongst the races of South Africa still exist and are even driven deeper by legislation. More unpleasant apartheid laws are passed, and more are being drafted.

South Africa is back to "normal" now that the major political organisations of the African people are banned, viz. the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress. Their militant off-shoots, "Umkhonto we Sizwe" and "Poqo" have been broken up by police with the aid of informers. Indeed, "sabotage" (in practice militant opposition to apartheid) has been largely stamped out. The authorities can boast of "calm" and "peace" prevailing now, and the situation being "under control".

But beneath the calm and peace bubbles discontent, bitterness, fear and mistrust. This is a feature of another version of South Africa's "traditional way of life", the other one being comforts "for whites only".

But is the peace prevailing the calm before the storm? Or a sign that white supremacy will last forever? Africans

believe in the former, while whites and some Coloureds believe in the latter.

In the locations there is deep-rooted mistrust and bitterness and fear. Parents have seen their teenage sons (in Pretoria) dragged out of bed in the early dawn, and after being accused of being Poqo members, given long jail sentences. School children never forget the sight of police vehicles at schools coming for their fellow students and brilliant teachers and have often asked the question: "Who will be next?"

So great is the torment that some parents doubt the value of educating their children as most educated people are labelled "communists" and are very much hated by Whites. Moreover, there are almost no commercial outlets for their skills.

THE SABOTAGE TRIALS have created great suspicion among local residents. The anonymity of State witnesses and work of informers make most people look about before saying anything. Some people don't even greet one another or even exchange visits.

"The price of Judas has gone up," they say. "Modern Judas drives a beautiful car, has a fat bank account, has a good job and enjoys pass-law relaxation."

They verify this with the observation that before the sabotage trials, there were very few cars in the locations, and that since the trials, many people seem to have "won lotteries". Also, some unemployed people don't seem to be bothered by police.

With remarkable bitterness, I was ordered to "Voetsek!" when I went to welcome back to "normal" life, an ex-friend who had just been released from detention. On my way home I was accosted by some unknown men, who suspected me of informing.

Another man told me: "I don't want visitors in my house. I discuss nothing with anybody, even my family, who may turn informers under 90-days detention. I know nothing, and I want to stay that way. Now get out!"

Ninety-days detention has changed the once-smiling teenagers into bitter, vengeance-seeking men. They are

CHIEF LUTHULI

oppressed people of South Africa and to the cause of freedom that they should be treated to this unhappy display of disunity by those who should be working rather to bring their fellow-oppressed to their own pitch of militancy and commitment, and should be organising victory against the regime.

Your loss of freedom will not end until this unity is achieved or until the emergence of a movement which will transcend the existing groups, should they finally be rejected because of their inability to get on with the job. Whichever way it happens, your own status, and that of Mr. Sobukwe, is likely to be assured. Your service to South Africa, and to the universal cause of freedom, in the days of your active political leadership, and now, will never be forgotten. Your future participation in our national affairs is confidently looked forward to. ●

PETER MOTSOANE, *free-lance journalist, lives in Pretoria.*