

struggle of the South African people this man, a member of the privileged group, gave his life because of his passionate belief in racial equality. This will serve to strengthen the faith of all those who fight against the danger of a "race war" and retain their faith that all human beings can live together in dignity irrespective of the colour of their skin.

I have, of course, known of Mr. John Harris and his activity in the movement against apartheid in sports for some time.

Last July, a few days before his arrest, the attention of the Sub-Committee was drawn to a confidential message from him on the question of sports apartheid.

I have recently received a message sent by him from his death cell in Pretoria Central Prison in January. He wrote:

"The support and warm sympathy of friends has been and is among my basic reinforcements. I daily appreciate the accuracy of the observation that when one really has to endure one relies ultimately on Reason and Courage. I've been fortunate in that the first has stood up—my ideals and beliefs have never faltered. As for the second, well, I'm not ashamed—I know I've shown at least a modicum of the second."

When I think of John Harris, the first White martyr in the cause of equality in South Africa, I am reminded powerfully of a great White American, a man who gave his life over a century ago—on December 2nd, 1859, to be exact—because of his passionate hatred of slavery: I mean John Brown.

People said then that John Brown was eccentric, that he was unwise in attacking the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, and that his act would only strengthen the slave lords.

History has made a very different judgment. Whether the particular act of John Brown was right or wrong, wise or unwise, his cause was right and invincible.

Those whose hands are stained with the blood of John Harris have, unfortunately, not learnt the lesson of John Brown.

On that fateful day of December 2nd, 1859, as he left his cell to mount the scaffold, John Brown left his last message: "I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this *guilty land* will never be purged away, but with Blood."

Within two years, the nation was embroiled in a civil war in which it paid the price of half a million lives. The north resounded with the anthem:

John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in its grave,

But his soul goes marching on.

I wonder if Dr. Verwoerd and his cohorts and apologists are seeking a repetition of history. ●

John Harris

1937-1965

AN OBITUARY PROFILE



A THIRD-GENERATION SOUTH AFRICAN, Frederick John Harris was born in 1937 and spent part of his childhood on a farm at Eikenhof in the Transvaal. From earliest days his intellectual brilliance was recognised in the family circle. He became a radio "Quiz kid" and his relatives, several of whom were teachers, used to say half-seriously of him that he would one day be Prime Minister. From an early age his main dream was of himself as a statesman in an ideal South Africa.

Many white South African schools are still places where brawn is more admired than brain; in Harris's school-days this was even more the case. He was not a happy schoolboy either at his primary school, where he was an English-speaking boy among Afrikaner children, or at high school where he could not match success at his work with sporting prowess. He matriculated with distinction in 1954.

The tolerant, catholic atmosphere of the University of the Witwatersrand brought John Harris out in a way that school had failed to do, and he was for two years a member of the Students' Representative Council. His life was not bound up with university affairs, however, and he kept up the family tradition of open-air life with hitch-hiking, camping and country excursions in vacations. He had met Ann Pearson when she was still at a Johannesburg convent, and their boy-and-girl affair lasted through university and teacher-training. Against family opposition, Ann being a Roman Catholic and John a free-thinker, they were married in a Roodepoort registry office in April 1959, both having taken up teaching posts.

IN THEIR EARLY YEARS of marriage the Harrises saved hard and in 1960 went to England, John entering Pembroke College, Oxford, and Ann teaching at a secondary modern school at Abingdon, near Oxford. When an unexpected pregnancy forced them to the realisation that their savings would not carry John through Oxford without Ann's earnings as a teacher, they decided to

THE ANONYMOUS CONTRIBUTOR writes that this obituary profile was compiled from private and published sources, notably the interview with Ann Harris by Jill Chisholm, published in the Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, November 7th, 1964.

John Harris

go back to South Africa.

Ann Harris has said that "we could have stayed in England but we just felt that we wanted to be back in South Africa. One of the things that decided us to come back was that John felt strongly that he should take an active part in things and help change things". She had known long before this of his commitment: "I think he felt," she suggested, "that when we have a non-racial South Africa we would want to have some share in building it."

They were returning to a South Africa in which rapid change had for the first time in their lives begun to seem more than a long-term hope. The post-Sharpeville State of Emergency and "Africa Year" coincided in 1960. They had joined the multiracial Liberal Party before leaving; within a week of being back in Johannesburg early in 1961 John Harris had become active and was soon to be elected to the Transvaal provincial committee of the Party. He was a delegate to the National Congress of the Liberal Party in Durban the same year and impressed delegates from other parts of the country by his clarity and conviction. In 1962 he became a member of the Transvaal executive and the National Committee.

JOHN HARRIS HAD ALWAYS held strong views on racial equality and social justice but had been in other ways a conservative. In his student days he had opposed the communist and left-wing socialist movement at the university. He had not held out much hope for change in South Africa and had considered emigrating to New Zealand.

In the exciting atmosphere of post-Sharpeville South Africa, he developed a new faith in South Africa's nonracial future, in the cause of universal suffrage and a South African welfare state. Ann Harris said in an interview while John Harris's case was awaiting appeal: "His prime political interest at this time was how to get rid of the Nats and how to have a nonracial South Africa. He really believed that a nonracial South Africa was possible—very much

so. And he still does, I know." She said that at this period the Liberal Party "became one of the most important things—if not the most important thing—in our lives".

John Harris resumed the study of politics at the same time that he took up active political life. At Witwatersrand University again, he read part-time for an honours degree in politics, Oxford having assured him that he would be accepted for a B.Phil. if he took such a degree. At the time of his arrest he had written the examination and was busy with his thesis.

THIS WAS A TIME OF FEVERISH ACTIVITY, in his teaching work (in English and French at the new Hyde Park High School, Johannesburg) and in political and student life. Ann Harris has said of John: "He has always been very serious about what he thought were important things. John is always quite sure that he is right once he has thought a thing out and taken a decision on it . . . I don't think he is a perfectionist but he decides on a few things that are really important and he is very serious about these."

He took such a decision when he joined the South African Nonracial Olympic Committee in 1962. Here was a clear-cut short-term objective—to force the South African Olympics authorities to bring about desegregation in South African sport or face expulsion from the Games. This was more immediate and concrete than the long-term objectives of the Liberal Party, concerned very much at this time with drafting blueprint policies for that non-racial South Africa which suddenly seemed so much more remote than it had done in 1960-61.

SANROC had been created by Dennis Brutus, secretary of the South African Sports Association which had practically alone fought against racialism in sport. Brutus had organised for SANROC the support of nonracial (*i.e.* 90% nonwhite) sporting bodies with a total membership over 45,000 strong. Harris shared Brutus's passionate belief that white South Africans would

be forced to oppose the Afrikaner Nationalists' race policies when it was found that these were causing the country's expulsion from one international sporting body after another. Ann Harris has said, "I don't think he ever doubted SANROC would work. In many ways John has always been an optimist, especially about the future of South Africa. I think he is still optimistic about this."

HIS OPTIMISM ABOUT SANROC'S immediate objectives was not misplaced, but its real purpose, to change white attitudes, he knew would be harder to achieve. He had quickly become a vice-chairman and when Dennis Brutus was banned from all meetings; all political and social activity and confined to central Johannesburg, Harris took over the leadership.

As chairman, wrote a colleague, "he was indefatigable, inundating the International Olympics Committee with newspaper cuttings, letters and memoranda, proving racial discrimination by the South African Olympic Games Association. He travelled to Rome, Lausanne and London to campaign for South Africa's expulsion if she did not comply with the Olympic principle of racial equality". The same colleague wrote of him as "the man principally responsible for the expulsion of the apartheid South African Olympic Games Association from the Tokyo Olympics", a success which the hard-headed, unsympathetic Johannesburg *Star* called "the only really effective boycott so far established against South Africa in sport". He appeared on television in Britain in 1963, and in a French television film made in South Africa, but never shown, due to South African government pressure.

THE BANNED DENNIS BRUTUS had escaped to Swaziland, but in an attempt to reach an all-important I.O.C. conference in Europe he travelled through Mozambique, where the Portuguese authorities arrested him and handed him over to the South African political police. John Harris, his wife recalls,

John Harris
continued

took a week off from the college where he was teaching and rushed around frantically, trying to establish what had happened to Dennis and at the same time to make arrangements for SANROC to be represented at the vital Baden-Baden meeting. He himself was prevented from boarding an aircraft at Durban ten minutes before departure, when his passport was removed by Political Police. This was in September 1963. From then on, blows fell heavily; the shooting of Dennis Brutus as he tried to escape from custody in Johannesburg; his own banning order the following February; personal attacks on him, in public when he lost his teaching post and an Afrikaner nationalist newspaper tried to have him legally prevented from teaching when he joined the staff of a commercial college, and in secret, when he was subjected to anonymous telephone threats and eventually when shots were fired at his house. One shattered the lounge window when John and Ann Harris were sitting a few feet away in the dining room.

THE BANNING ORDER had perhaps the most serious effect. It was served on him on the eve of an important conference he had organised to discuss nonracial sport. He was compelled to resign from SANROC and the Liberal Party and to cease any work connected with them, was banned from all social and political gatherings and confined to the magisterial district of Roodepoort, with special permission to visit Johannesburg to attend his job. He had to report to the Roodepoort police station every Monday.

With Dennis Brutus a political prisoner on Robben Island, Liberal Party colleagues being banned one after another, all legal activity a thing of the past for the banned African congresses, among whose members he had many friends, overt political action had come to an end for John Harris. His Liberal Party and SANROC colleague, Dr. Robin Farquharson, recalling John Harris's "acute and questing mind, his openness, his wide nonracial

friendships, and most of all his passionate dedication", described how "denied the chance to continue any form of open activity against racialism, he turned to underground work for the resistance movement, with the results now known".

Ann Harris noticed that "he seemed to think the position in South Africa was worsening rapidly. Sometimes he would feel very depressed about this. He always spoke of two things when he felt like this—the terrible malnutrition and the thousands of people who were in gaol for offences like the pass laws. Not about big things, but about the everyday lives that Africans were having to lead".

His wanderlust, which his love of the varied, sweeping South African countryside fed on, was curbed by the ban, as was his sociable nature. He mixed easily with people. Ann Harris described him as "the sort of person who makes friends on trains", and remembered occasions in particular when he had made casual friendships with Afrikaners, with whom, she found, he got on particularly well. The ban ended all this too.

IN JUNE 1964 THEIR FIRST CHILD, David, was born. When he was a month old, Frederick John Harris, already a trained and active member of the small, multiracial African Resistance Movement, found himself almost the sole survivor in Johannesburg, after mass arrest had resulted in the capture of his fellow members. He then conceived an ambitious plan aimed to justify the seemingly smashed A.R.M., to give hope to the oppressed millions, and to force white South Africa to think again. On July 24th at Johannesburg Park Station he tried to carry it out unaided. His failure caused the death of an old lady and injury to 23 bystanders. It also, as he knew it might, led to his own execution, by which the present minority Government robbed South Africa of one of its most brilliant and promising sons, even if it may have given South Africa something else instead. ●

Songs of War

AMERICAN NEGRO FREEDOM SONGS are in the news at present and one is reminded of several famous South African protest songs of the 1950's, such as the Alexandra bus strike song, *Awakhwelwa* . . . (They are not ridden in), which certainly had some success in its limited field. On both sides of the Atlantic both words and music for this kind of song are direct and uncomplicated. They are readily learnable and their message—though sometimes only for those for whom it is intended—is unmistakable.

It was trumpets, so we are told, which brought the walls of Jericho tumbling down, and ever since that time (if not before), music of one kind or another seems to have been put to use in war. The earliest known musical victory in Africa seems to have been when Hanno the Cathaginian suffered an "ordeal by music" when his naval expedition landed somewhere on the West Horn of Africa about the year 500 B.C. He wrote:

"By day we saw nothing but woods, but by night we saw many fires burning, and heard the sound of flutes and cymbals, and the beating of drums, and an immense shouting. Fear therefore seized on us, and the soothsayers bade us quit."

Victories won by sound alone may be somewhat rare. But even if they often do no more than instil courage and a sense of common purpose, battle songs and cries, or instruments such as trumpets and drums, seem almost always to have played an essential rôle in warfare. During Shaka's reign of terror in southern Africa his impi's beat on their shields instead of bothering with drums, and each regiment had its own battle cry and repertoire of regimental and war songs. Some of these are still remembered in rural areas, though they are seldom sung today.

ONE OLD ZULU REGIMENTAL SONG from the mid-19th century is of particular interest, even if it was not successful at the time. It commemorates the stand taken by Shaka's successor, Dingane, against the Voortrekker invaders of Natal. The chorus goes:

Sunduz' amaBhunu ahambe!—Drive out the Boers, make them go!

Hoshoza!—Poke them out (like a snake from its hole)!

Bathi uyalon' izwe.—Some say he (Dingane) is ruining the country.

Ingani uyalungis' abafo!—But at any rate he is "fixing" the foreigners!

This song is, of course, an out-of-date model. In all probability public utterance of these words in South Africa today would count as sabotage, if not treason, even if the singers pleaded a more political interpretation—the removal of White domination—rather than literal "pushing of the Boers" right out of the country.

Practical protest songs for today call for new levels of metaphor. They need to mean a lot more than they say— or mean one thing while saving another.

Whether or not this happens to have been the original ancestor of all modern South African Resistance songs it was certainly not