

SOUTH AFRICA BULLETIN

PUBLISHER: AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA, 311 EAST 43 ST., NEW YORK 10017

EDITOR: MARY-LOUISE HOOPER

OCTOBER 1964

FIRST EDITION

This is the first appearance of a bulletin on South Africa, which will be issued periodically by the American Committee on Africa. It will not be put out on a regular basis, but from time to time as events in South Africa seem to warrant.

The purpose of this little sheet will be to acquaint American friends of South Africa with current developments, which receive little or no coverage in the American Press. We hope by increasing interest in South Africa to add to the number of these desperately needed friends. We also plan to use these pages from time to time to suggest various kinds of ACTION, when we feel that such action will be pertinent to events and helpful to those in South Africa whom we are trying to assist.

THE AXE FALLS ON THE WHITES

There have always been individual Whites who have worked with non-Whites in South Africa, and since the formation of the Liberal Party and the Congress of Democrats in 1955 there have also been organizations — predominantly 'white' — which in various ways have aided and supported Africans and other citizens of 'color' in their fight for justice and equality. The Liberal Party, the Congress of Democrats, the Black Sash, some of the churches, the Institute of Race Relations, and to a lesser extent, the Progressive Party: these are the major collaborating or cooperating groups.

Since the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960 government pressure on the white liberals has steadily increased. Many were jailed during the 1960 Emergency, some for as long as 5 months; hundreds have been banned, prevented from carrying on the work of their organizations and frequently cut off from their very livelihoods, especially if they happened to be trade union officials. Since the enactment in 1963 of the General Law Amendment Act, section 17 of which is known as the notorious "90-day" clause (of which more later), large numbers of Whites of a liberal persuasion — along with hundreds of non-Whites — have been detained in jail.

Quite recently, however, the Government seems to have decided on a new "hard line" against all white cooperation with the non-white cause. As the Johannesburg *Star* editorialized on August 29th last:

"Non-Europeans have long lived under a system of arbitrary laws. The axe has now fallen on a wide section of the white population ... who have been made to realize that their own freedom is limited to those who do not too radically challenge that system."

Some examples of this new stick-instead-of-the-carrot policy follow:

WITCH-HUNT AGAINST LIBERALS AND PROGRESSIVES

The country-wide police raids and hundreds of house searches carried out last July took place almost entirely in the white community. Some very prominent and not always politically active Whites — who have endeavored to conceal their names — were included in the searches, with the obvious purpose of warning and intimidation. Mrs. Helen Suzman, lone Progressive Party member of Parliament, said of these raids:

"The Progressives cannot be intimidated and we will most certainly continue with our policy which opposes apartheid."

As result of these raids about 60 people, mostly Whites, were taken into 90-day detention. A large number of them were teachers, lecturers and students at the English-speaking universities, plus 7 journalists. It is significant that 20 were leading members of the Liberal Party. In several cases the wives of white detainees have also been taken, at the same time or somewhat later, and asked to "cooperate — to make it easier for your husband", although nowhere in civilized law is a wife expected to inform on her husband.

NUSAS — Also on the list —

The National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) has long been in disfavor with the Government because of its "liberal and progressive" outlook. Their Vice President has often been a non-White; the organization is banned from Afrikaner and "Bantu" university campuses. Both the president, Jonty Driver, and the former president, Adrian Leftwich, were detained without trial for some time under the 90-day clause, and several other members as well. Mr. Driver was recently released, but Mr. Leftwich is still being held — why, and until when, no one knows. Some of those taken in the July raids are now beginning to be put on trial, on various charges, and some of course have been released. But as a well-known South African (whose name must be withheld) wrote recently in a letter: "The witch-hunt goes on. All non-conformists are being threatened: Liberals, Progressives and even the United Party, in time. I am afraid that they will all disappear eventually from the political map, and then there will remain only *The State*: one language — Afrikaans, — one Party — the Volk Party of the Nats."

POLICE PRACTICE NON-RACIALISM - IN BRUTALITY

A new chapter has opened in the South African freedom struggle: police now are practicing brutality against white citizens as well as those of color. Following are the first reports of physical ill-treatment of white 90-day detainees.

Four cases have been revealed of white prisoners being forced to stand, during uninterrupted police questioning, for periods of: 28 hours (I.F. Scherbrucker) 40 hours (Paul Trehwela) 42 hours (Norman Levy) and 43 hours (Dr. Costa Gazides).

Mr. Scherbrucker, in a letter smuggled out of jail to his wife, stated that he was interrogated continuously for 28 hours, during the whole of which time he was kept standing. He collapsed twice and was revived with cold water, then hauled to his feet again.

The other three detainees, now released, have sworn affidavits accusing the police of keeping them standing for the incredible lengths of time mentioned above. Their affidavits have been published in the Johannesburg newspaper, *Sunday Times*.

WHITE LIBERAL TORTURED IN DETENTION

Information has just come in a private letter to the American Committee on Africa that Mr. John F. Harris, banned former Chairman of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) was assaulted by police during 7 weeks in 90-day detention.

According to the letter, Mr. Harris, a well-known member of the Liberal Party who has long worked against apartheid in South African sport, had his jaw broken and was so brutally treated that he twice tried suicide.

"Framed" on a Charge of Murder?

On September 24th Harris, a 29 year-old teacher, was arraigned in a Pretoria court on a charge of murder and two charges of sabotage. To the shocked disbelief of his many friends and associates he was formally accused of having planted the July 24th bomb - which resulted in one death - in the "Whites only" section of the Johannesburg railway station.

Mr. Harris pleaded: "Not guilty" to all the charges. In court he seemed to be still suffering from a disturbance of balance due to the injury sustained while in detention.

Scapegoat Needed?

It seems highly significant that Mr. Harris should have been held for so long without charge, brutally interrogated and assaulted during that detention, and then suddenly accused of a shocking crime of which the South African police had not been able to find the perpetrator. Perhaps a scapegoat is needed?

THE KIDNAPPING OF MRS. ROSEMARY WENTZEL

The wife of a detained Liberal Party executive member, Mr. Ernest Wentzel, was kidnapped on August 10th from her home in Swaziland and brought forcibly by three unknown men to South Africa, where she was promptly arrested and taken into 90-day detention, where she remains at this writing.

The case is under investigation, and the British Embassy in Pretoria is having discussions with South Africa, since Swaziland is still British territory.

Mrs. Wentzel's abduction follows by only a few weeks the kidnapping of a British-born teacher, Dennis Higgs, from Lusaka, Zambia - again by unidentified persons, who delivered him to the South African police. Mr. Higgs was returned to Lusaka at the request of the British, but now the South African Government is trying to extradite him, claiming that he is a "saboteur".

A cloak-and-dagger band of pro-apartheid bully boys, who call themselves vigilantes, claim 'credit' for the Higgs kidnapping. They and similar groups are said to operate extensively doing "counter-espionage" for South Africa in the High Commission Territories (Swaziland, Basutoland and Bechuanaland) and soon-to-be independent Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia). An interesting recent development is the discovery by the *Rand Daily Mail* (September 19) that the cars used in the kidnapping of Dennis Higgs had been bought by the Police and Defense Force respectively, and as far as could be ascertained were still their property.

The *Daily Mail* calls this a "remarkable coincidence", and one which "strengthens suspicions that there was some association between the kidnapers and the South African authorities, however informal or at whatever level this may have been."

THE 90-DAY LAW

Frequent reference has been made above to clause 17 of the General Law Amendment Act of 1963, commonly called the "90-day law".

This legislation was passed in June of '63 over widespread and emphatic protests by ministers, teachers, students, many lawyers and some judges. It provides for arrest and detention by any police officer who "believes" that the victim "might" have information desired by the police. No charge is laid against the detainee, and he may be held for an unlimited number of 90 day periods, during the whole of which time he - or she - is strictly held in solitary confinement. No writing or reading material is allowed, and at the very most one hour of exercise a day during which conversation with other prisoners is prohibited.

No visitors are permitted to those in detention: not a lawyer, or a wife, or even a doctor or priest, without special permission which is seldom granted. Only a magistrate comes, once a week, pro forma, to see the prisoner. No letters come in or out. Frequently the family does not even know in which prison - sometimes not even in which city - the detainee is lodged.

It is said that some 800 South Africans — of all races — have been detained under this law. Some have spent more than one 90 day period; a few have been held for a very long time. Alfred Nzo, a leader of the banned A.N.C., spent 238 days in "solitary;" Morris Motsemela was 345 days in solitary confinement in a total period of 15 months.

Mental Health

Sixty South African doctors and psychiatrists have stated that solitary confinement is in itself a severe form of torture, and one that can lead to impairment of mental faculties.

This is proving most tragically true. The South African Defence and Aid, which assists detainees and their families, disclosed in their most recent bulletin that, out of one group of 83 accused who before their trial had first been in solitary confinement as 90-day detainees, 23 were committed to mental institutions at the conclusion of the trial.

Three detainees have committed suicide while in detention: two by hanging themselves in their cells, and most recently (September '64) a South African of Indian descent, Mr. Suliman Saloojee, jumped to his death from the 7th floor of police headquarters while "resisting interrogation" as the head of the Johannesburg Security Police put it.

TORTURE and 90 Days

Torture has become an accepted method of police interrogation, practiced widely and without mercy on non-White detainees only — at least until very recently. Affidavits from 49 African men giving details of physical abuse: electric shock treatment, smothering, methodical beating, kicking, etc., have been submitted to the Government of South Africa and to the United Nations by ex-detainees.

American Comment on "90-Days"

The 90-day law recently called forth the following comments (September '64) by Mr. Charles W. Pettengill, President of Rotary International, and a member of the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association.

Speaking, he said, not as Rotary president but as a lawyer, after his recent tour of South Africa, he declared: "If a government is sound, if its policies are right, it does not need this kind of legislation. What the 90-day law means is that the Government is running the country like a police state ... No civilized Western democracy has such a law."

N.B. THE 90-DAY LAW WAS RECENTLY RENEWED FOR ANOTHER YEAR!

A TOUCH OF GOLD

Americans, who dearly love gold, according to our detractors, are being bilked these days by a short film called "A Touch of Gold".

"Bilked" is the correct word, because movie patrons in theatres all over the country are paying good money to see what they expect to be a travelogue on South Africa, and are shown instead a clever propaganda opus, depicting South Africa as

inhabited almost entirely by white people, with an occasional shot of a happily smiling "Bantu", in gay tribal dress, carrying a naked baby.

"A Touch of Gold" was made by the American Hamilton Wright organization which was registered as an agent of a foreign country, and received \$150,000 from the South African Government for making it.

In a letter written to the Director of the South African Information Service in the U.S. and presented (March '63) in Senator Fulbright's Committee on Foreign Relations at a hearing on activities of foreign agents, Hamilton Wright describes the film as a "soft sell". He writes: "Political propaganda as such would have been largely ineffective. But institutional publicity — touching on South Africa's general life: economic, social and cultural accomplishments, sports, festivals, etc., can tend to soften hard political attitudes."

To quote Mr. Peter Weiss, President of the American Committee on Africa: "The film is very clever propaganda, showing South Africa as a beautiful country with a primitive, peaceful Negro population. Actually, the country is a powder keg, and its policy of apartheid is the worst thing since Hitler."

"A Touch of Gold" was widely shown last June in New York, as a 20 minute "short". When its propaganda character was brought to the attention of the owners of two large New York theatre chains, they withdrew the film from 17 theatres under their control. At that time a statement was made by Warner Bros., distributors of "Touch of Gold", that the film had then completed its national run. However, it continues to crop up.

Recently, at his own neighborhood theatre, Mr. Weiss saw an announcement of the coming of this film and immediately phoned to protest. When the theatre owner learned that the "travelogue" which he had booked was not entertainment but politics, he promptly removed it from his program.

"I am not only a theatre owner," said Mr. Meyer Ackerman, afterward, "I am socially minded. Of course we'll take the picture off."

A SUGGESTION TO YOU:

WATCH for "A Touch of Gold" at your neighborhood theatre!

PROTEST to the theatre owner, if the film threatens to appear. Maybe he will prove as cooperative and public-spirited as Mr. Ackerman.

PICKET the theatre, as a last resort. Let the people know that the film is pure propaganda.

N.B.

This is not "incipient theatre censorship", as some might charge. To quote Mr. Weiss again: "It concerns deception by American public relations firms used by foreign governments."

Under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, all propaganda presented to the American public should be labelled as such, not masqueraded as entertainment.

THE U.S. SUPPORTS THE SOUTH AFRICAN "BOOM"

United States business now has a stake of nearly a half-billion dollars in South Africa, and this investment is expanding.

In 1963 General Motors, Ford, Firestone Tire and Goodyear companies together added 51 million dollars to their already heavy investments. Chrysler announced last month (September '64) a new investment of \$35 million, to be spent over four years in developing a plant near Johannesburg, which for the first time will not only assemble but manufacture in South Africa engines, rear axles and transmissions for Chrysler cars. Eventually a full car manufacturing industry is planned.

2,000 people are to be employed in the new plant, "mostly Bantu (Blacks)" to quote the official South African Digest.

In the United States Chrysler - and all auto workers - earn by their new contract \$3.20 an hour, or \$6,656 a year cash wages, plus fringe benefits.

In South Africa, Chrysler pays a South African wage scale for non-Whites. One cannot say exactly what the African wage will be in the new plant: hopefully it will be somewhat higher than in similar factories in the past. In South African manufacturing in general the average annual African wage, in 1962, was \$548, not including certain fringe benefits. (The white worker in manufacturing, during that period, earned an average of \$2,734, plus greater fringe benefits.) It can easily be seen that, using "mostly Bantu labor", a tremendous profit can be made.

The American Department of Commerce states that profits of American business in South Africa run about 22% on the investment, which is almost twice the average percentage profit of U.S. investment in all foreign countries.

In quoting wage figures the important question is not what the worker receives but what he can purchase with his money. The Johannesburg Municipal Non-European Affairs Department in June '63 set the poverty datum line for an African family of 5 at \$67.54 a month: the minimum amount needed to "preserve health and decency." As quoted above, the average African in the manufacturing industry earns about \$46 a month: more than 25% below this poverty line.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Get and read the special issue of *Africa Today* (March, 1964) called: "U.S. Policy on South Africa". Price 50¢.
2. Make the story of American involvements known in your community.
3. Write to the President of Chrysler Corporation, Mr. Lynn Townsend, P.O. Box 1919 c/o Chrysler Corporation, Detroit 31, Michigan.

Protest their economic support of apartheid in South Africa;

Urge them, since they are operating in South Africa, to at least pay their African workers a living wage: i.e. the one pound a day (\$2.81) long demanded by African trade unions.

Suggest that they make a plan, *now*, for their gradual disengagement from the structure of apartheid, and withdrawal from South Africa, as realistic self-interest demands, in view of the racial war which will certainly come, sooner or later, to South Africa.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THIS BULLETIN?

if so, please *print*:

(Mr.) (Mrs.) (Miss)

Address

Tear off, and return to: Mrs. Mary-Louise Hooper, American Committee on Africa, room 705, 211 East 43rd St., New York 10017.

(No charge is now being made for the *South Africa Bulletin*. Contributions are, of course, welcome.)