Poet Brutus—banned but not bowed

“I am the exile and the wanderer, the troubadour. Gentle I am, and calm and with abstracted pace absorbed in planning, courteous to servility but wailing fills the chambers of my heart and in my head behind my quiet eyes I hear the cries and sirens.”

—Dennis Brutus

Dennis Brutus became a journalist but the walls were closing in. And in 1968 he was arrested for attending a meeting.

Released on bond Brutus escaped to Mozambique, where he was captured by Portuguese secret police. He was again taken to prison, in Johannesburg. While being transported by three armed policemen, Brutus got out of the car and ran. He was shot in the back. He was recaptured and taken to a hospital and then to Robbin Island, which he describes as “kind of a Devil’s Island off Cape Town.”

Brutus was released in 1965 and placed under house arrest. Finally, he applied for a passport to leave the country to obtain work. He was offered, and took, an exit permit—which made it a criminal offense for him to return.

Rockland County, N.Y., Molefe Pheto

S. African describes struggle

A South African artist touring the United States painted a not-so-pretty picture of his country this week as he visited Rockland for a day.

He told of almost 300 days he spent in a South African jail on charges of terrorism, and his eventual release because, he said, the state was unable to find sufficient evidence for a conviction.

No, I don’t think my eventual freedom shows that there is justice in South Africa. Ten months of my time were wasted for nothing, and blacks are subjected to an entirely white court system. All the magistrates are white, all the prosecutors are white, and all the senior police are white.

Pheto is a member of the Music, Drama, Art, and Literature Institute, a black artist’s group, whose main goal is to preserve black art works for the blacks.

Pheto said he plans to return to South Africa in November, and expects to continue his work cultivating black art in his country.

“I just want to be able to determine my own life and to have an equal share of the country. Yes, I have four children. What do I want for them? I would like to see them get a university education and to have something for their futures... human dignity and freedom, something I couldn’t have.”

Daily Mail

“...What is there to celebrate? I’m just moving out of a prison where I’ve been confined to four walls but I know I’m going to a bigger prison.”

“As long as unjust laws like the Terrorism Act remain, the chances of any individual escaping detention by the Security Police are very slim. It is just a question of who’ll be next,” he said.