Business as usual around the globe

16/5/69

Hilda Bernstein's PERSONAL COMMENT

In South Africa, 60 adult men were crammed last month into a space 11.3ft long, 7ft wide, and 5½ft high, the centre of three compartments in a police van in which three men died of asphyxia.

Total number jammed into the death van: 89. Maximum capacity laid down by the regulations: 65.

"Death would be a slow, gradual process", stated a doctor in court: the victims eventually suffered heart attacks.

The van with its 89 prisoners was loaded at a jail called Modderbee, to travel 28 miles to Johannesburg, but it broke down several times and spent six hours in the blazing sun on the road.

* * *

When it eventually arrived, one of the policemen in charge opened the van door, but the other ordered him to close it, and warders, hearing the cries of the men inside, gave them water through an air vent.

Eventually the men, some dead, many unconscious, were released from their ordeal.

Then a trial took place. Two African policemen were charged with culpable homicide. They had loaded and conducted the van, and ignored the pleas and cries for air and water.

Justice Ludorf found them guilty and gave them a sentence of 10 minutes each. They would never do what they had again, he said, so a prison sentence would not be proper: he had also considered a fine, but that would serve no useful purpose.

* * *

About this sickening event, the *Rand Daily Mail* commented that it was all the more appalling "for having taken place in the squalid circumstances peculiar to this country":

> "All the prisoners were non-white, and they were on their way to trial in the Bantu Commissioner's Court. Few of the cases heard there would be the subject of criminal proceedings anywhere else in the civilised world."

These men were to be charged with contraventions of pass laws, those terrible laws that create hundreds of thousands of criminals out of Africans in South Africa.

* * *

The incredible number of 1,777,652 alleged contraventions of pass and related laws were investigated in one year (1966-67). A few years ago pass arrests ran to 1000 a day. Then they went up to 1600.

Now more than 2500 Africans are being arrested every single day throughout the year for what are purely technical offences.

In other words, men, women, and teenagers are bundled into those vans at the rate of 2500 a day (equivalent to arresting the total *white* population of South Africa every four years).

Having written that, I feel any comment by me would be superfluous.

* * *

"Totally absent from the anti-war demonstrations in New York and most other cities last week", writes the American radical weekly, *Guardian*, on April 12, "was any recognition on the part of the anti-war movement that a women's liberation movement not only exists but is growing at a phenomenal rate". The *Guardian* added:

> "Tens of thousands of women have, in the past year-and-a-half, become aware of their oppression as women in American society and are begining to organise to break the structure of male supremacy."

The paper goes on to comment about the deliberate indifference to this battle, and emphasises the importance of the women's struggle.

I had a greater (positive) response to my Personal Comment last month on women's problems than on anything else I have written. It was truly the striking of a chord.

* * *

Isn't it time the peace movement roused itself from its nice little rest on the question of the war in Vietnam? The Paris "peace" talks have become the excuse for inaction.

US Secretary of Defence, Melvin Laird, stated in March that "the basic problem remains achieving permanent South Vietnamese Government control over the country", without which, he made it clear, US troops would not be withdrawn.

The US delegation in Paris, on the other hand, speaks repeatedly of "self-determination" for the South Vietnamese people.

Meanwhile the US/Saigon military comand has bragged that it is killing 500 NLF cadres monthly in its first phase of "Project Phoenix".

Phoenix called for the physical liquidation of all NLF cadres, from central committee down to hamlet level, including the humblest schoolteacher or official. CIA lists, according to Wilfred Burchett, contain the names of 85,000 persons.

* * *

There are no courts, no trials, just people shot down as they are found by special assassination squads. The intentions are to wipe out the last man, woman, and child of what is technically called the VCIS (Viet Cong Infra-Structure).

"One man, one vote", says the US Paris delegation. "One man, one bullet", is the reality in South Vietnamese villages.

Rumours of secret behind-the-scenes contacts keep people quiet. Fantastic contradictions between the official US position at the talks and that of the Saigon delegation pass unnoticed. And people have now realised that the story of reduced B-52 missions was false.

It is time we realised that rumours of "progress" and "secret talks" are equally insubstantial, and returned to the realities of public protest and pressure.

See also page 6.

USA: Warfare Dole

The idea that the US Congress will be more sceptical about the Defence Department budget this year is a too-often spoken conclusion. It appears to be a calculated ruse—words to soften the repetition of the same old actions supporting the large warfare dole.

Recent House of Representatives action, granting a $14 million subsidy

the current F-5 in 15 foreign countries shows that even the less-developed nations will be able to support the F-5-21."

Already 700 planes of this new type are programmed for 16 countries—among them, Canada, the Netherlands, and Norway have put up $50 million for the improvement.

But the promise of profits doesn't stop

minimalism in art

13/6/69

Hilda Bernstein's PERSONAL COMMENT

That the exhibition mounted by the American artist Galimatias Scarto should have been so largely ignored, is surprising since he is without doubt the most outstanding exponent of minimal art today.

minimal art (It is thus spelt, without capitals) is also called ABC art, or literalist art, or, as at the recent Tate exhibition, The Art of the Real. It makes no direct appeal to the emotions, nor is it involved in uplift; it has no desire to justify itself, but instead offers itself in the form of the simple, irreducible, irrefutable object.

To specify an illusionistic space on an otherwise obviously flat surface, as other artists tend to do, inevitably carries representational associations. minimal artists believe imagery must be as free as possible from associations and refer to nothing outside its role in the picture.

Glossy blue plank

Expressionism, even at its most abstract, still continues many aspects of representational art, and constructivism was basically nostalgic in its search for meaning through traditional methods of composition.

Instead of perceptual experience being accepted as a means to an end, the minimal artist makes it an end in itself. Galimatias Scarto has gone further than any other artist today.

By eliminating entirely all associations of any kind, by presenting us with plain walls devoid of the convention of canvas and frame, he has removed all the extraneous influences that give rise to imaginative experience or human emotions, leaving nothing to intervene between artist and viewer save the pure perceptual experience.

He has thus eliminated every subtlety and complexity of composition which, by extension, constitute editorial statements about the world.

Even though other minimal artists avoid congestional incident and reduce structure to its simplest orders such as symmetry, frontality, and easily comprehended systems such as the grid, the module, the parallel; even though their work is a distillation of formal compositional means; still they have not rid themselves entirely of compositional effects.

John McCracken, the Californian artist whose works consist of coloured planks leaning against a white wall (each plank painted one colour), is an example of this, as anyone who saw his glossy blue plank at the Tate Exhibition must realise.

Other leading American artists of the Sixties who were represented included Alexander Liberman, whose austere anonymous paint surfaces and radical restriction of image are essential to minimalism of the 1960s —but my point is that his single thin white circle on a plain black ground was not restricted enough.

Also, there was Robert Morris, whose plain wooden platform, painted white, was titled "Slab"; Robert Huot, who displayed two blue planks suspended from a wall in contrast to McCracken; Sol de Witt, who constructs crates of baked enamel on aluminium; and Ad Reinhardt, whose "Ultimate Painting" is simply a plain black square in a black frame.

All these, particularly Reinhardt's claim to "ultimate", appear pretentious when compared with the genius of Galimatias Scarto, who shows us empty galleries entirely devoid of any extraneous symbols or objects with emotional associations or solid constructions which can be touched.

He thus deprives us entirely of anything perceptual, creating a mindlessness characteristic of the art of the mid-Sixties, that, despite its detachment, has an aggressive vacuity that can establish a tremendous intimacy with the patient viewer.

Eliminate obstacles

Mark Rothko tells us that the minimal artist wishes to eliminate all obstacles between the painter and the idea, and the idea and the observer, obstacles such as memory, history, geometry. Only Galimatias Scarto has really succeeded in this.

But the absence of paintings on the blank walls of an entirely empty gallery has at the same time reduced minimal art to the minimal beyond which it cannot go, and thus eliminated the necessity of artists painting anything at all; which is a most logical extension in the sphere of bourgeois art of the values of the nuclear age.

Carolyn Stoloff

STEPPING OUT

If I could collect the jewels
from broken strings rolling
on the floor of feeling
to sort them in bowls labelled
by cut, clearness, and colour
I'd step out nightly
clapping like a gypsy
with foreign tongues spangling
my wrists, a hail of crystal
eyes at my neck—loop
upon loop—and in my hinged ring
the garnet of your heart

a more civilised expedient than violence."

It is even doubtful if the expedient of prefabs would be necessary. It is estimated by *New Society* that 50,000 houses are empty at any one time in London. They also quote Robb Spencer's (chairman of Lend-a-Hand) estimate that all of London's homeless families—over 10,000—could be accommodated in the vacant properties in the Paddington area.

It's certain that in this part of Fulham many homeless could be accommodated. All it needs is an effort of will on the part of the homeless and an effort of imagination on the part of the authorities. Or perhaps just more civil disobedience?

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the ugly and the beautiful

BERLIN/PRAGUE: NOTES FROM TWO CITIES

18 July 69

Hilda Bernstein's

PERSONAL COMMENT

BERLIN [EAST]: Humming with activity and obvious signs of a thriving economy. A city in the throes of construction on an enormous scale.

Alexanderplatz, razed by war, now razed again to become the planned heart of the city: fly-overs, a multi-storey hotel, modern blocks, gardens. Nothing haphazard, all designed to grow according to the pattern of the model city plan.

An American woman at Templehof Airport (West Berlin) said she had toured East Berlin in one of those smart glass-domed buses. "It looks as though they're doing a great deal", she said hesitantly, "but the guide told us it's all come to a standstill."

The buses tour over the weekend when everyone leaves the city for the woods, parks, lakes, the soft and beautiful exterior that surrounds the concrete heart.

* * *

So East Berlin is growing: but it gives rise to fearful doubts. The problem is not one of East or West, socialism or capitalism. It is the problem of housing huge populations in cities: those enormous, faceless, remote apartment blocks where life is compartmentalised, and people put in tiny boxes, piled up and up.

One recalls the throbbing vitality and responsive life of over-crowded, run-down neighbourhoods. These wide, wide streets, these spaced-out buildings, these extensive areas and huge housing complexes: will communities grow in them? Will people find it a good way to live?

* * *

Flowers in six-sided concrete boxes placed together on pavements. Many small trees that eventually will grow to soften the streets. Many areas of grass and flowerbeds, well-kept. And groups of chairs beneath the quadruple row of little linden trees along the famous Unter den Linden (the old trees were all destroyed in the war).

A large, weed-covered hill in one suburb, and a woman from Frankfurt says: "A hill of dead houses: we have many of them." They are building in one decade what once took centuries, so perhaps sameness is inevitable, in spite of the coloured tiles on balconies, and the space and flowers.

A Berliner tells me: "But it was ugly here before the war: grey slums, ugly buildings." The new city will be clean and light with big squares and fountains. Who knows? One day I may visit it again and think it beautiful.

* * *

PRAGUE: But East Berlin will never be beautiful in the way Prague is beautiful—beautiful beyond words, glorious with a hundred spires, cobbled streets, old market-places, ancient gates, bridges, statues, the castle on the hill.

Obliterated slogans line the base of every block of flats from the airport into Prague: sometimes a faint "Dubcek" or "Svoboda" persists beneath the overlaying paint. The first citizen I meet, a taxi-driver, states firmly to his unknown passenger: "Dubcek a good man." His photograph remains in small shops, behind windows, a modest sweetness in the smile. They loved him very much.

* * *

Prague is shabby. Pot-holed, crumbling streets, many barricaded off for repairs that do not proceed: rubble, sand, stones, dug up and cast there a long time ago: scaffolding on buildings weathered till it merges with the facade itself: the spectacular Charles Bridge obscured by rusty scaffolding.

There are courtyards dim and dirty, with pools of water, and eroding plaster. And yet the young Dane who married a girl from Prague five years ago says: "But it's much improved, much better than it used to be. They've done a great deal, it's much, much better." He has visited Prague 16 times and says he loves it more each time. This is easy to understand.

* * *

A student takes me to visit a students' club where they play "soul music". Its amplified throb echoes round the hill where stark white apartment blocks (students' quarters) rise from unmade streets.

A packed cellar, mostly black faces, some Czechs. The soul music is a physical assault and makes conversation impossible. An Ethiopian student with a face like a Yoruba mask shouts: "It's difficult now, difficult"—but cannot put his thoughts into words.

The Czech girls wear short skirts (contrast with the knee-length respectability and puritan air of Berlin) and boys with long hair don't attract even a passing glance. They want to be with-it in the style of West Germany, France, Britain. There are many young people: Berlin has lost a whole generation.

* * *

A grey-haired woman removes dead flowers from the base of the monument in Wenceslas Square and places fresh bouquets in vases. "The best economists in the world couldn't solve our problems now", a Prague writer tells me. "Only one thing can get it going: the people, their energy and enthusiasm. But they won't do it now. They don't care and they don't try."

* * *

In the evening, walk to the Old Town Square and sit on the red and yellow benches surrounding the statue of Jan Hus: watch the groups gathering beneath arched houses to see the clock strike and the 12 Apostles take their bow.

A wide expanse of cobbled square, peaceful with the blessing of no traffic, made splendid by the blending of centuries of houses, variety, fine proportions, the ancient town hall, and the church, all shining with glory in the clear still light of evening.

A lifting of the spirits: it is for all men, for all time.

It's all a hopeless dream, isn't it?

Hilda Bernstein's PERSONAL COMMENT

A friend of mine, who had been shown over a car factory, observed a man with an aerosol can spraying the seats and interiors of the cars, as each one, new and polished to perfection, came off the assembly line.

"What's that?" he asked. He was told it was a leather smell—it made the upholstery (which came from a machine, not an animal) smell like genuine leather. A modern marvel.

Something like this, but even more marvellous, was embodied in the most important news item of the year —"*Bread that tastes like bread,*" read the *Observer* headline.

"Delicious old-fashioned bread—with the home-made taste of those crusty loaves our grandmothers were reputed to bake—may soon bring a revival in British bread-eating . . . because of the development of a new taste additive which bakers can mix with flour before making dough."

The additive is the result of seven years' research; its ingredients include wheat protein and processed yeast. The report does not mention the other five ingredients. After millions have consumed them regularly with their morning toast for several years, we may discover their effects.

I long for the day when a new discovery, an even greater discovery, will be made, and we will read the headline: *Bread that IS bread!*

"Delicious old-fashioned bread," the item will read, "is now being made from yeast and wheat-flour, the refinement of which has been halted at an early stage to prevent the removal of valuable health- and flavour-giving ingredients. Bakers believe this is the biggest break-through yet in the preparation of consumer-acceptable bread."

It's all a hopeless dream, isn't it?

Insanity Dept 1

On my wall is a photograph of a desolate moonscape—a great waste of round craters pitting a featureless land as far as the camera's eye can see. But when you look again, there are the lines of what once were fields, crops, fading beneath the coin-bright holes. The caption reads: "B52 saturation bombing along the Van Co Dong River."

What do Americans need with the moon? They have reduced huge portions of a once-lush country to a devastated moon-like desert, ravaged and desolate. Man's greatest triumph?

Wearing his hyena's smile, Nixon, the man who represents the very depths of evil and hypocrisy, prates about the greatest week since the creation of man! "I would annex the heavens if I could," said the arch-imperialist, Cecil Rhodes. And now they *are* annexing the heavens, to touch them with the same corruption they are spreading on earth.

Praise the courage of the astronauts? They were millionaires the moment they were named—the risks were enormous, so are the rewards. I praise the courage of those who sacrificed for ideals, for freedom, for their fellow-men, without fame, dollars, world acclamation. Caleb Mayikise, James Lenkoe—only recently they were tortured to death in Vorster's prisons; *their* names should be written on the stars.

For what will they use all the marvellous new discoveries associated with the space-drive? To improve and perfect their arsenals of world-destruction. The phrase may be a cliché, but the facts remain, and I for one will not rejoice at the technical achievements of American imperialism.

Insanity Dept 2

Adam Small, a well-known (in South Africa) Coloured poet, recently wrote an article titled: *Insanity at Bus Level.* How does a man live, he asks, in a society whose basic insanity he suspects?

Coloured people in Cape Town (unlike Johannesburg, where all public transport is competely segregated) use the same buses as Whites, but sit in different seats. In some buses the division is by deck—upstairs if you are Coloured, downstairs if you are White. In others, there are portions marked off — Whites in front, Coloureds at the back.

Now the *poles* at bus stops have been repainted to indicate which side of the pole you may stand to queue for which part of the bus, so that the two separate queues, streaming into the same bus, can then separate out again. Almost invariably, writes Adam Small, the non-Whites find themselves standing—whether they're old, or crippled, or laden, doesn't matter—while there are still places to sit, but not for them.

Saddest of all is to see White children in crowded buses pushing past all those standing non-White to take their reserved places. At these basic levels, the child learns that you give up a seat only for an elderly White person, and takes to heart the immoral thing that there are people and people—some who do not count as people.

"Ours is a society", writes Adam Small, "which rears brutes, many entities who fall below the criterion of sane humanity."

After slipping on a piece of soap

Hilda Bernstein's PERSONAL COMMENT

It is quiet in South Africa now, and the Prime Minister, J. B. Vorster, is always saying how stable and peaceful is Africa's most advanced and powerful land.

Apartheid arouses deep passions and bitter controversy all round the world: South African sportsmen are attacked, indignant American Congressmen (told they would get visas to South Africa if they kept their mouths shut) are holding forth on apartheid evils, the UN Special Committee is accumulating great files of evidence, Law Societies and journalists' unions condemn apartheid laws, and trade unionists decry the lack of free unions.

But outside South Africa there are these noisy voices, not *inside*. Inside it is quiet. It is a curious condition. Such quiet is, after all, only something achieved in the last few years. Once there was ferment: great demonstrations, stay-at-home protests, mass strikes; once there were campaigns against pass laws, the Defiance Campaign, the Congress of the People. Once we South Africans, too, marched in our thousands. Now it is quiet.

Strange things happen in South African jails. You have heard of the battered baby syndrome—babies assaulted by a parent or parents who, when it is necessary to take them to hospital for treatment for broken limbs, explain that the baby "fell off a bed", or "slipped while playing"? South Africa has a "battered prisoner syndrome".

Political detainees die from injuries "sustained after slipping on a piece of soap" as in the case of one detainee, Solomon Modipane (according to police evidence). Or after slipping and falling in the shower, as in the case of Nicodemus Kgoathe.

Kgoathe died in hospital of injuries while being detained under the Terrorism Act. His injuries, listed by a doctor, included linear marks on the shoulders, which could have been caused by a sjambok (a leather whip), U-formed wounds, which could have been the result of an assault with the buckle of a belt, and a wound on the eye.

Is anyone uneasy?

An increasing number of detainees commit suicide by hanging themselves—according to police evidence. Solwandle Ngudle, a very strong, tough and brave man, was said to have been found hanging. James Hamakwayo was said to have committed suicide by hanging himself. Also Leon Yum Pin, according to police evidence. A man whose name has never been disclosed, but being held under the detention laws, had his death "disclosed" (but no identity) in parliament (in reply to a question).

Ah Yang hanged himself, and J. B. Tubakwe also. Solomon Modipane (the man who slipped on the soap), however, died from "natural causes" according to the Magistrate's findings. So did Nicodimus Koathe, although the doctor said Kgoathe told him he had been assaulted and beaten by the Security Police—the Magistrate in his case could not conclude that any person was to blame.

And James Lenkoe, suicide by hanging; and Alpheus Madibe, founder and leader of a strong peasant movement, suicide by hanging. But Caleb Mayesiko, a leading personality of the now banned African National Congress, a prominent trade unionist—our comrade Masango Caleb Mayekiso, who had been released from jail after four years—was rearrested under the 180-day detention clause and died some time in June of this year "from unknown causes".

Suicide by hanging, slipping on soap, pneumonia, unknown or natural causes, it does not make much difference. All the men who hanged themselves evidently used their own belts. Nobody knows how they obtained those belts; as soon as you enter the jail, your belt and tie is taken from you (and your watch and, if you are an African, your shoes).

Mrs Lenkoe gave evidence that her husband had only one belt, and had not had time to put it on when he was arrested. Shown the belt which he was said to have hanged himself with, she said it was not his. An American expert flew to the inquest to testify that Lenkoe had received electric shocks. The Magistrate tried to prevent his giving evidence, and refused to allow Mrs Lenkoe's counsel to ask relevant questions about interrogation procedure.

So if these men, held in solitary confinement, interrogated by the Security Police, kept indefinitely without being charged, decide of their own free will to commit suiside by hanging themselves with belts they are known NOT to possess, why should anyone feel uneasy? Because of some upstart American expert on burns who suggests that one man was electrocuted? Because of six affidavits of torture handed in to support Gabriel Mbindi's action against the state? Yes—*it has not been quiet enough.*

Do not be troubled. In future, no one will need to have a stray remnant of conscience stirred. Now there is BOSS, the new Bureau for State Security, responsible solely to the Prime Minister, usurping the functions of military intelligence, controlling agents both inside and outside South Africa.

BOSS is covered by laws of such protective intensity that it is an offence to disclose any matter with which BOSS is dealing if this is prejudicial to the interests of the state—whether or not the person or newspaper making the disclosure knows it is forbidden. The Prime Minister has the power to suppress or prohibit any evidence before a court.

Any person who publishes or reports or communicates security information may fall under these laws (with 7 years in jail), and the new law will effectively shroud the holding, interrogation, torture, and "suicide" of detainees. So all will be well. As long as we do not know, we can turn over and sleep untroubled. It is quiet. There is stability. South Africa is, more than ever before, safe and profitable for investment.

Break the silence!

And we, we who still have voices? *Scream out the truth!* By all and every means, break the silence! Do not permit one representative of white supremacy, whether on the golf course, cricket pitch, tennis court, running track; whether posing on behalf of "culture" or business; not one of those who uphold or defend or excuse the system, or try to explain it; do not permit them to go unmolested, unhindered.

Speak, speak, demonstrate, etc. In the name of Mayekiso, in the name of Kgoathe, in the name of Saloojee and Madibe and Ngudle, in the name of freedom, decency, justice, for the sake of peace and children and happiness—speak, speak, speak! Break the silence!

Hilda Bernstein's

PERSONAL COMMENT

What's in a name?

Namibia? I hear people ask. *Where's that again?*

Namibia is South-West Africa, the huge territory illegally annexed by South Africa. A quibble about a name? Not to the people of that country.

The name "South-West Africa" was imposed by imperial Germany when the Germans (late-comers in the African scramble) occupied Hereroland and Damraland, and then expanded to include Namaqualand and Ovamboland. It all became South-West Africa.

The imperial powers were not concerned with tribes or groupings, with languages and histories. They wanted African possessions. They drew their own frontiers with arbitrary disinterest, splitting tribes and families. They discarded any name too difficult for white tongues and imposed names such as the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, South-West Africa, East Africa; or tried to perpetuate their own glory—Rhodesia, Northern and Southern.

But there is nothing wilful in the insistence of change. And for Africans the discovery of self is part of the rediscovery of history. We too, the people of Namibia say, are a nation with a past.

In this case the name is derived from a great white desert, the Namib, which sweeps like a scimitar down 850 miles of coastline from Angola as far as South Africa. The Nama word is !Namib; the "!" represents the click stress in the pronunciation, meaning literally "enclosure".

The Namib desert shielded the interior from Portuguese navigators when they sailed down the coast in the 15th century. They could not penetrate the Namib. And this great desert rolls down to a freezing sea, chilled by Antarctic currents. The desert is fabulously rich in diamonds, the sea is one of the world's greatest fishing grounds.

This—the Namib—which shielded the interior, rich in diamonds, the coastline a treasury of fish, has prompted the people to choose the name Namibia, land of the Namib. Once you know this, can you again think of them under the anonymous grouping of "South-West Africans"?

* * *

We South Africans are very familiar with the arrogance of denying people their right name, a denial of identity. It is done to individuals daily, in shops and factories and homes. Not only individuals, but whole peoples, feel themselves stripped of their identity, flung down as worthless, robbed of their past. If there has been no history, then there has been no achievement. If evidence remains of achievement, then it is "explained".

In this way, children of South Africa and Smith's Rhodesia are still today taught that the great ruins of Zimbabwe are an "unsolved mystery" from a shrouded past, but generally attributed to Arabs who must have sailed down the coast and penetrated the interior to build this strange stone city.

Yet there is no mystery about Zimbabwe, which archeologists and historians today state was a royal African village whose existence clearly implies a high degree of organisation in the working force that built it and the leaders who occupied it. Thus, Africans have re-named the country which is theirs, although still in the hands of an alien minority, "Zimbabwe", and Zimbabwe it will surely become.

So the Gold Coast became Ghana, and Nyasaland adopted the beautiful name of Malawi—people of the flames or fire—a name derived from the surface of Lake Nyasa which, seen from afar, glows like fire. It is not a game in semantics. It is part of the struggle to become.

* * *

I was astonished when quite by chance I listened to a radio programme called *Petticoat Line*, a panel of women giving their views on questions raised by listeners. I heard the expression of archaic attitudes ("good old-fashioned virtues", I'm sure they would say) circa 1925.

The participants showed a remarkable ability to reduce every question to the level of feminine trivia, a sort of denigration of their own sex. I prefer to have lower wages than men, one of the women insisted, provided it means I can continue to be cossetted and cared for by men . . . oh, what a delightful, fluffy, feminine little thing!

Every man must have felt his breast swell—and what were they supposed to be discussing? Oh, just some nonsense about women doctors with high degrees who never get top public appointments.

Of course, it is a point of view many women hold ("I find that feminist thing one great big yawn" another one stated) but many women hold contrary views, and these are not aired on this panel, which seems to be selected not for originality nor independence of thought, but for the delightful little actressy noises that its members make.

* * *

I wish that more people would keep protesting about programmes that are offensive, and that includes that revolting *Black and White Minstrel Show*. Injured innocence is not enough. If people do not understand why such programmes hurt, why they are not acceptable, it is time they learned some of the facts of life about being black, for example—or being a woman.

The non-Asian's Asia

ROGER MOODY

Asia Handbook, edited by Guy Wint (Penguins 16s).

This work was first published in a longer edition by Anthony Blond three years ago, and has been revised for Penguin Books by the late Guy Wint. [illegible] ening essay on the Asian intellectual) decides that "nationalism, populism, xenophilia, and xenotropism generally, xenophobia, and nativistic revivalism, inferiority feelings, curiosity, and resentment in the face of the metropolitan culture are found throughout the conti[illegible]

Hilda Bernstein's Personal Comment

Humanity IS outraged

5 Dec 69

The re-naming is in itself an atrocity—"Pinkville", the transformation of an Asian village to fit the juke-box world. But, of course, it was not the first, nor even the worst, atrocity of the whole evil and atrocious war against the Vietnamese people. Why, then, did My Lai stir up the press, the BBC, to such an extent?

If you are of pre-war vintage, as I am, then you recall the same process over Nazi Germany. For years we shouted to blank walls, deaf ears. No-one cared about the leftists beaten to death in the streets; no-one cared about the old Jewish men scrubbing pavements with acid; no one cared about concentration camps.

We lefties were always accused of exaggerating. Some Stormtroopers, we were told, might go too far, but then, look at the provocation; and anyway it was all for a splendid cause. Remember the cause? Yes, to save the free world from Communism, just like the Americans in Vietnam, saving Asia from Communism. All became justifiable, justified.

But, finally, the time came when our radical shouts of protest were taken up by respectable people, non-progressive, non-socialist people. When was that? When the Western world, the late bourgeois world, as Ernst Fischer calls it, was drawn, even against its own intention, into the struggle to contain and defeat Fascism.

Perhaps as far as the Vietnam war is concerned, it is simply that the late bourgeois world, ambivalent as always, has reached the point where it cannot any more stomach the means used to secure the world against Communism in Asia.

* * *

So they have started questioning the means; but they still keep quiet about the ends. *But the means ARE the ends.* They form one whole, one concept. The ends for which the war is being fought by America dictate the methods used.

Is it conceivable that the Bernard Levins really believe that napalm, unlimited use of personnel weapons, defoliants, crop destruction, mass murder of civilians, pacification and re-settlement, B-52 blasting in Van Co Dong, the massacre in Ba Lang An, in My Lai, tossing Viet Cong out of helicopters, shooting babies —that all these are simply unfortunate, to be decried, but merely incidental means to a noble end? Means to establishing a just and fair and democratic society operating on a multi-party Western democratic parliamentary system? That this is the way in which freedom and justice will be secured for Vietnam?

* * *

It is a terrible thing to become older, to have lived through the rise of fascism in Europe, to have cried out for years in the dark to the indifferent, to have seen the physical defeat of Nazism, the opening up of the death camps, the long years of trying to judge, to bring to justice, to punish those who became a party to the crimes, and then to sit one evening in a quiet room and hear a young man called Meadlo, when asked—*Why did you do it?* reply, as though his words were valid, as though they had never been said before—*I was told to.*

Does each generation have to learn the same lessons all over again, right from the beginning? Man's collective experience should be passed on in his genes. Or we should have developed a vaccine to give the new generation immunity from commiting again the crimes of the past.

* * *

What hurts most, a knife-thrust in our minds, is the large number of people who turn wide-eyed surprise on our indignation, respond with astonishment to our outrage. What do you expect? they ask, it's war, isn't it? There have been worse things . . . what about the other side . . . many other My Lais . . . also the Viet Cong shoot people. And wasn't Hiroshima a bigger crime?

As though cruelty and terror and suffering should make us indifferent to cruelty and terror and suffering. As though we should keep quiet when crimes are committed because there have been other, heavier crimes. As though they can be weighed on scales and our indignation measured according to the weight. So much indignation for shooting civilians, a little extra where women and children are concerned, add another measure if there were babies as well. Don't be outraged at My Lai, it's not the first, it's not the worst . . .

No, there is no measure, only each time the surge of a new sorrow for what is wrong. And a determination never to cease to cry out, never to stop feeling anger and outrage, always to bear witness, for the words of George Sand are written on my very flesh:

Humanity is outraged in me and with me. Let us not dissimulate nor try to forget this indignation which is one of the most passionate forms of love.

HILDA BERNSTEIN's

Personal Comment

The Forgotten Heroines

Writing a monthly column of comment has its pleasures and its pains. The pleasures include having a platform for something you feel must be said; "getting it off one's chest" is the phrase, although it is not my chest that hurts, and having written whatever it is does not leave me cool and aloof. Another pleasure is evoking a shout of agreement, as happened when I wrote an angry piece about contemptuous attitudes towards women. (Undoubtedly, I shall return to *that* one.)

What gives encouragement is rather negative—the same criterion bolsters my love of drawing and painting and keeps me going—not that I am good, but others, with greater pretensions, more honours, are so often worse. Every journalist, like anyone else, is tempted to coast along now and then. But the facile, uninformative, space-wasting, glib and endlessly-lengthy "reviews of the decade" to which we have been recently treated, makes me think that some of them are determined to coast it all through the next ten years.

* * *

And who is *your* choice for the man of the decade? Or woman, for that matter, they add casually, if there *is* one who fits the role? I will overlook my contempt of this silly game (for how on earth can you weigh in the scales the contribution made to mankind by people in so many diverse fields? Like asking, who is greater, Beethoven or Shakespeare?) so that I can name my choice: the women of Vietnam. If you like, the *woman* of Vietnam.

What love, what sacrifice, what endurance, what strength, can compare with that of the woman of Vietnam? What greater contribution has anyone made in the past ten years to justice, sanity, peace, in this insane world?

* * *

I have so much I want to write about Vietnam that this whole paper would scarcely fill my needs—for new information keeps coming to light—new facts, new records, which show how much has been kept hidden from us. But for the space left this time I will use only one subject. It is the proceedings and debates of the First Session of the 91st Congress of the United States of America, taken from the Congressional Record of June 17, 1969.

Ogden R. Reid told the Senate about a report issued by a private inter-religious study team sent to Saigon to investigate stories of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment by the Thieu-Ky regime. The team were politically impeccable—including a Methodist Bishop, a rabbi, a retired Admiral, the Dean of Boston College Law School.

The team members visited a number of prisons, including one known as the "show case prison" (because it has American funds and advisers for improved facilities). In the "show case prison" there were an estimated 200 children from 10 to 14 years of age and 200 from 14 to 18 in the prison, not yet sentenced. The team asked to see the children's section and were shown two cells. One room, about 40ft by 25ft, *held 47 children under 8 years of age* (one was four years old, said to be in prison because he was caught stealing a necklace).

The children were squatting in one end of the bare room. No materials for play or study; the food looked inadequate; all, even the four-year-old, stood at attention and did not move or speak. In the next cell there were 67 children slightly older, but under 10 years. The situation was the same.

After details of imprisonment, torture and brutalities in the prisons the team were permitted to visit, they reach the conclusion "that the Thieu-Ky government has . . . imprisoned thousands of persons without the most fundamental elements of a fair hearing and in a shocking number of instances, without even apprising the imprisoned persons of the charges against them.

"This . . . has had such a devastating effect on the people of South Vietnam and such a chilling impact on all political activities that it seems important to chronicle in some detail the process by which the present Saigon Government, in the name of a wartime emergency, can deny persons arrested for political "offences" all of the guarantees which Vietnamese constitution statutory law gives the persons accused of crime . . ." Mr Reid concluded his report by saying there is an estimate of *at least 20,000 non-communist political prisoners*. Torture and physical abuse are widespread.

The majority are held simply because they oppose the government. Is this then what we are defending and fighting for? he asks.

* * *

Footnote for welcoming 1970: Some information about the stepped-up use of chemical warfare by the US since Nixon took office. During his first 10 months in the White House, 285,000 people in Vietnam were affected by poison chemicals; 2,300,000 acres of ricefields and orchards have been destroyed in 1969 alone; and the poisons also killed poultry and dairy cattle and the fish in streams and lakes.

In places where chemicals have been sprayed there are numerous and increasing reports of the births of malformed babies—this last receives confirmation from an unpublished report by research laboratories in the British National Cancer Institute, revealing that 245-T and 24-D, both chemicals widely used in South Vietnam, cause cleft palates, eye and other serious defects in the foetuses of mice.

The horror of it all silences slick comment as we face ourselves at the beginning of this new decade.

Hilda Bernstein

The humiliation of the political prisoner

On an island just off "the fairest Cape" - the Cape of Good Hope - is the strangest hospital in the world. The beds are neatly made with clean sheets. Each one is empty. The patients lie on the floor, next to the beds; not even a mattress to lie on - just a thin felt mat.

This is the hospital on the penal colony, Robben Island, where all South Africa's African, Coloured and Indian political prisoners are taken. The beds in the prison hospital may not be used; they are kept neatly made "for inspection." Only once were the prisoner-patients issued with pyjamas and instructed to lie on the beds. This was in May, 1964, when Dr George Hoffmann, Delegate General of the Red Cross International Committee for Africa, was visiting Robben Island. After he had inspected the hospital the patients climbed out of bed and that night they slept, as usual, on the floor.

The incident is described by a man who was serving an 18-month sentence on Robben Island at that time, Dennis Brutus,* a South African poet, teacher and sportsman. He spent some time in the hospital there after being assaulted by warders. Brutus knew that a man named Hoffmann was visiting Robben Island when a warder was told: "You'd better issue Brutus with shoes. Hoffmann may want to see him."

Dr Hoffmann visited prisons and police stations in various parts of South Africa, and spoke to some 90-day detainees (political prisoners held without charge). His report was suppressed by the South African government in spite of many requests for its release. Now, after two and a half years, it has suddenly been released. By an odd coincidence, the report was published the same day that a Johannesburg Regional Court case had to be adjourned because a prisoner, according to his counsel, had been so severely assaulted by a prison official that he was unable to give evidence.

Perhaps it was not coincidence that its issue came at the beginning of a campaign on South African political prisoners, launched by the International Defence and Aid Fund.

In issuing the Hoffmann report, the South African Department of Justice interspersed it with its own comments and refutations. Dr Hoffmann stated that of prisoners selected at random for private interviews, three out of seven on Robben Island complained they had been beaten by warders, and five out of six prisoners at Kroonstad prison accused warders of beating, smacking and using bad language. "Assaults on prisoners are regarded in an extremely serious light," stated the Department of Justice; and the commanding officer at Robben Island said he did not tolerate the beating of prisoners; it was, in fact, prohibited.

Dennis Brutus describes his own assault "for refusing to carry out orders." He was given a wheelbarrow loaded with rocks which was too heavy for him to push; he thus refused to carry out a lawful prison order, and was accordingly assaulted. The beating and kicking opened a stomach wound (he was shot while trying to escape from custody) and thus he had the privilege of seeing the prison hospital. He also describes how, when he arrived on Robben Island together with about 60 other prisoners, he witnessed a "carry-on" - a form of mass beating.

The new arrivals were temporarily locked in cells overlooking the reception yard. A batch of prisoners was brought in from the quarries where they had stopped their stone-breaking as a protest against the ill-treatment of one prisoner. This refusal to carry out orders is extremely serious. The colonel in charge may give the order for the indiscriminate use of force by warders if he feels that prison security is threatened. This is a "carry-on." The order was casually given; the prisoners were mercilessly beaten by warders, who chased them around the yard with truncheons, and "carried on" until they were physically exhausted themselves, when, Brutus relates, panting, sweating, laughing, they walked past the cells saying, "Dit was lekker" - that was good, nice. No doubt any inquiry would show that force had to be used to restore order to prisoners who were out of control.

It is not easy to know the truth. A political prisoner, Harold Strachan, vowed that on his release he would expose the horrible conditions in the jails. After serving a three-year sentence he was released, and did speak up. He is now serving another 18 months for "publishing false information" about prison conditions. The main substance of his allegations which appeared in the Rand *Daily Mail* were not even contested by the authorities; but some points were exaggerated, or not proven to the satisfaction of the court.

There is an estimated eight and a half to ten thousand political prisoners - no one knows the exact number; it may be much higher. Is there any other country in the world where there is one political prisoner to approximately every 2,000 people (men, women and children)?

Unlike other countries, political prisoners receive harsher treatment than ordinary criminals. Prisoners are categorised A, B, C or D and receive privileges accordingly. Most politicals are graded D - one letter, one half-hour visit, every six months. After the Strachan exposures, conditions for the whites (in Pretoria Central Prison) did improve; many were upgraded, allowed a visit and letter every three months, and given entertainment in the form of music or a film show. But the revelations did not alter life on Robben Island. Many wives of these prisoners cannot afford the fare from Johannesburg to Cape Town, so that even after six months the prisoner may wait in vain for a visit.

Prime Minister Vorster has announced a campaign to tell the world the truth about South Africa. The truth has been banned, proscribed, exiled, house-arrested, imprisoned. The truth is embodied in the life sentences being served by two brilliant lawyers, Bram Fischer and Nelson Mandela (a life sentence in South Africa is for life). After three months solitary confinement in the "observation cell" (prisoners call it the madhouse) Bram Fischer is sewing mailbags. Nelson Mandela, dressed the way white South Africans like to see their "natives" - in rubber sandals and shorts, like a "boy," breaks stones on Robben Island. The truth is in Robert Sobukwe, who served his sentence and is now held forever on Robben Island.

It is to uncover the truth about political prisoners and to obtain the implementation of the United Nations resolution calling for their release that Defence and Aid has launched their campaign. At the opening meeting five former political prisoners bore witness to the long periods of solitary confinement (a Frenchman has just broken the record by staying in a cave by himself for six months; he had books and a telephone; some 90-day detainees in South Africa endured up to nine months alone in a cell, without books and with no communication to the world); to the assaults and torture; the horror of being kept sleepless for days and nights on end under continuous questioning.

Truth has many faces. When Dr Hoffmann testified in his Red Cross report to "the spotless cleanliness and orderliness" in all the prisons he visited, he was surely telling the truth as he saw it. How was he to know that prisoners in one jail could never wash properly, because they were not allowed to use a bathroom which was kept cleaned and polished "for inspection"? Or that the patients in Robben Island hospital lie under the beds, to keep them so spotlessly clean?

***After completing his sentence he was released, but placed under house arrest. He left South Africa on an exit permit.**

British arms for South Africa?

Hilda Bernstein writes: According to the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*, both George Brown and James Callaghan favour modification of the arms embargo on South Africa for economic and political reasons. The South African Foreign Secretary, Dr Muller, in his meeting with Mr Wilson and Mr Brown, is stated to have invoked the provisions of the 1955 Simonstown Agreement in a bid to get Britain to supply maritime equipment needed by South Africa's developing Navy. This was to include warships, seagoing aircraft and other weapons.

Sir Charles Wheeler, chairman of Associated Electrical Industries, speaking to 400 guests at a South Africa Club dinner in London, estimated the immediate cost to Britain of the arms embargo as £150 million, but the long-term loss as "incalculable". Once South African defence forces were geared to weapon systems from other countries there would be little reason to revert to British supplies. Sir Charles hinted that a British Minister might soon visit South Africa.

The current defence vote in South Africa is £128 million, a seven-fold increase in 9 years. The defence minister, P. W. Botha, points out that this was only 3.35% of national income compared with 4.7% in Britain and 11% in the United States. It would be more interesting, however, to compare South Africa's percentage spending with any other industrialised country with a similar population (18 million) that is not counted as a major power.

PN 17/11/67

Hilda Bernstein

South Africa's sick obsession

"It is doubtful whether a single family which has been in South Africa for five generations can prove that it does not have Coloured relatives." The photo above indicates the difficulty of drawing a dividing line between Whites and Coloureds.

A little girl has become the epitome of one country's obsessional racial policies. She is a pretty, smiling 11-year-old, Sandra Laing, who may no longer legally live with her own parents because the laws of the Christian Republic of South Africa have assigned her to a different racial group to them; her parents *may* circumvent the law by keeping her as their servant (in separate quarters).

Sandra's mother and father are White, and her two brothers are White, and they hold that precious passport to the good things in South African life - White identity cards. But Sandra in appearance is "Coloured," which in South Africa means a person of mixed racial descent; following complaints from parents of other children at the White school she attended, the Secretary of the Interior reclassified her as Coloured. The Pretoria Supreme Court dismissed her father's appeal after the child had been duly inspected by the Deputy-Secretary of the Interior. The judge, Mr Justice Galgut, with a certain judicial reluctance, referred to the impossible situation created. However, he found the Secretary of the Interior had not acted irregularly in altering her classification.

The problem of defining "race" has always vexed the Nationalist government. In 1950 it passed the Population Registration Act, which was designed to decide once and for all the racial group of each individual. This was an essential piece of legislation for the strict application of all other apartheid laws.

Although definitions of the various racial groups were incorporated in a number of laws in the past, the system up to 1950 had not been rigid. People could pass from one group to another if their physical features allowed. Even if it meant breaking with their families, there was every inducement for Coloured people, for instance, to pass as Whites. Schools, jobs, homes, entertainments, pensions - everything for Whites is on a higher and finer level. For those Africans who could pass as Coloureds the rewards in a way were even greater, because they became free of the whole system of pass laws and similar restrictions.

The practice of passing to the group with the higher privileges was extremely common. But with the Population Registration Act, everyone had to be registered according to their racial classification, and that registration is recorded not only on identity cards, but on birth certificates and all official documents.

The Act caused great misery and distress, and its effects on individuals and families was devastating.

Couples wishing to marry learned for the first time that they were not in the same racial classification. (Intermarriage is illegal.) White families were "disgraced" and divided, as were many who considered themselves Coloured and found they had been re-classified as Africans.

There was no absolute yardstick to apply. Officials made up their minds in their own way. "They just looked at me and said I was a Native," a young Coloured man said. Here was Mr W, a Coloured man who served in the Cape Coloured Corps in two World Wars. Both his father and mother had Afrikaans surnames and he was employed in an occupation where only Coloureds are accepted. It took a government official exactly half an hour to turn him into an African. From then on, he had to carry a pass; he had to leave his home and try to find another in an African location. He lost his job. He could not even claim his war veteran's pension when he became old - Africans are not eligible for such pensions.

In some big hauls in Johannesburg, Coloured people were rounded up in the streets on their way to work or while shopping; or were taken from their jobs. They were taken before a tribunal where questions were fired at them: "What does your mother look like? Did your grandfather have crinkly hair? Where did your grandmother come from? What is your wife? Her father? Her grandfather? Is her complexion darker than yours? What is the length of her hair? Do you eat porridge? Do you sleep on the floor or on a bed?" By such questions, they determined a person's racial category.

But how do you decide to what group a person goes when that decision must be made contrary to every known biological law? Is this man to be classified as African or Coloured? Stick a pencil in his hair and ask him to bend down; if the pencil stays in, he is Bantu - African; if it falls out, he is Coloured.

Two eminent anthropologists, Professor Dart of the University of Witwatersrand and Dr Breutz, a government ethnologist, are called to give evidence before the Race Classification Board to prove that an 80-year-old man should be classified as Coloured, not African. Cross-examined, Professor Dart says Mr Wangra is not an African: "His forehead is elevated, the head broad and short, his nose has a high bridge with the typical curved contour of an Armenoid nose. He has neither the jutting lower jaw nor the flared nostrils of a Negro." The man is made to turn his face this way and that, so that the Board can examine all points and compare them with the pictures of different racial types.

Where science fails to bolster these policies, justification is sought in the Bible. God created black and white and intended them to be separate and different. Where division does not exist it is forced into being. Where something tends to blur division, it is changed.

By 1963 there were still more than 20,000 people living in a twilight no man's land - borderline cases not yet categorised according to race. There was also a steady flow of court cases as people appealed against their race classification. The courts have sometimes proved too liberal in their interpretations of the law, and finally this year the Minister of the Interior decided to amend the Population Registration Act once again (amendments had already "closed loopholes") to stop "insidious integration" by Coloureds slipping over the line.

Yet, according to Dr O. Wollheim, a Cape Provincial Councillor, it is doubtful whether a single family which has been in South Africa for five generations can prove that it does not have Coloured relatives; in the South African parliament a United MP, Captain Jack Basson, upset members by saying that if people are to be classified solely on the grounds of descent, then "there are very few people sitting in this Assembly today who could be classified as White."

He told parliament of a couple who had come to him for help. The woman was White in appearance, but when she became engaged to a White man it was found she had been classified as Coloured. Captain Basson had tried to obtain reclassification, but failed; the woman and her fiancé committed suicide.

When Mrs H. Suzman (the only Progressive Party member of parliament) referred to the "sick obsession with race and colour in South Africa," a government MP called out to her: "You have got a sick obsession with humanism."

The new amendment will finally close the South African stud-book, so that the country's three and a half million Whites will no longer wake in a sweat at night thinking of the few thousand near-Whites trying to cross the colour-line. Now you can be as fair and Aryan as you like, but if the records show you had a Coloured great-grandmother, you must be classified as Coloured. When the records are not clear, then in determining a person's classification his "habits, education, speech, deportment and demeanour in general shall be taken into account."

Stanley Uys has written in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*: "In the long and sordid history of racialism this must rank as one of the most peculiarly obsessive Acts ever recorded."

What is most dismal is that when the provisions of this monstrous piece of legislation are tightened up again and again, no Nationalist ever raises a voice of protest; a whole people stand by and watch this injustice being perpetrated on another people without showing any visible signs of disturbed conscience.

These people are *perfectly* sane. These sane ones say: "Why shouldn't we discriminate? It's our country, isn't it?" In Britain thousands of sane people close the doors of their apartments and offices and industries against people of different skin colour.

You must have a "sick obsession with humanism" to find something terrible in the laws of a country which say that a smiling, 11-year-old girl may not live with her own parents and her brothers because her skin is a little darker in colour than theirs.

Hilda Bernstein is a freelance journalist and specialist on African affairs who lives in London.

SOUTH AFRICA ROUNDUP

Rembrandt group fails

Hilda Bernstein writes: The attempt by South African industrialist Dr Anton Rupert to capture a lucrative share of East Africa's tobacco market has failed.

Fifteen months ago his international cigarette chain, Rothman's, opened its 33rd and newest link in Kenya. Rothman's of Pall Mall (Kenya) has lost nearly £218,000 in its first year. The enterprise may close down, or may be taken over by its competitors, the British American Tobacco Company.

The failure is attributed both to the fact that the BAT Company was too well entrenched in the local market, and to trade restrictions imposed by neighbouring Uganda and Tanzania which seriously curtailed Rothman's sales.

Anton Rupert is one of the apartheid Nationalist government's most successful businessmen. The Vice-President of the Kenyan government resigned at the time that Rothman's started in Kenya, to take up a post on its board of directors. Rothman's is one company marked down by anti-apartheid activists for boycott. The fact that boycotts *can* influence South African trade is underlined by this news item.

Township evictions

Proposals that Africans should be evicted from their township homes if they are out of work for more than a month have been attacked by the Federated Chamber of Industries executive council, meeting in Johannesburg.

Though the proposals are still in draft form, to be gazetted by the end of the year, a department (of Bantu Administration and Development) official, Mr F. B. du Randt, claimed that the one-month clause was already in operation in the majority of townships. It did not apply if there was documentary proof of sickness or incapacity to work, but a Cape delegate stated that "The bulk of Africans haven't got the courage or the time to seek an interview with an official" (for the purpose of putting their case against eviction).

Ninety-five theses

Ninety-five theses protesting against apartheid and Anglican Church policies were nailed to the door of St George's Cathedral, Cape Town, on the last day of October, in the manner of the reformer Martin Luther, 450 years ago.

The day was the 450th anniversary of the day Luther nailed his famous 95 Theses to the door of the church at Wittenburg in protest against the controversial sale of indulgences and other abuses in the Roman Catholic Church of 1517.

The theses were nailed to the Cape Town Cathedral's door by two white men in protest against the racial policies of apartheid and against Christian acceptance of these policies.

The action was prompted, they stated, by the rejection of three anti-apartheid motions at the Cape diocesan synod; the lay representatives who were responsible for the rejection were later publicly thanked by Prime Minister John Vorster.

The 95 theses for 1967 (prepared by young people of a Cape Town parish) concerned the doctrine of man's state, that there can be no inequality or classification between people, and that those who discriminate on grounds of race or colour (particularly the blasphemous assumption that God Himself made pigmentation to be a sign of inferiority) should beware of the judgment of God; that Christians cut themselves off from the word of judgment and grace if they tolerate exploitation, injustice, and the alienation of man; and that, concerning the segregation in Anglican churches, Sunday schools, and clubs, the law of the State which is at variance with the will of God is not morally binding on Christians.

Night schools to close

More than 500 adult Africans will be unable to continue their education when 10 African night schools in Johannesburg are forced to close at the end of this year, by order of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development and of Bantu Education.

One school, run by students of Witwattersrand University, has been operating for 24 years and educated thousands of Africans from illiteracy up to matriculation. The schools must close because they contravene the Group Areas Act and the Bantu Education Act. The former prohibits any coming together of Africans in what is designated a "White" area (all Johannesburg except for the African ghettoes), and the latter states no classes shall be held across the colour line, and that more than one pupil per teacher constitutes a class.

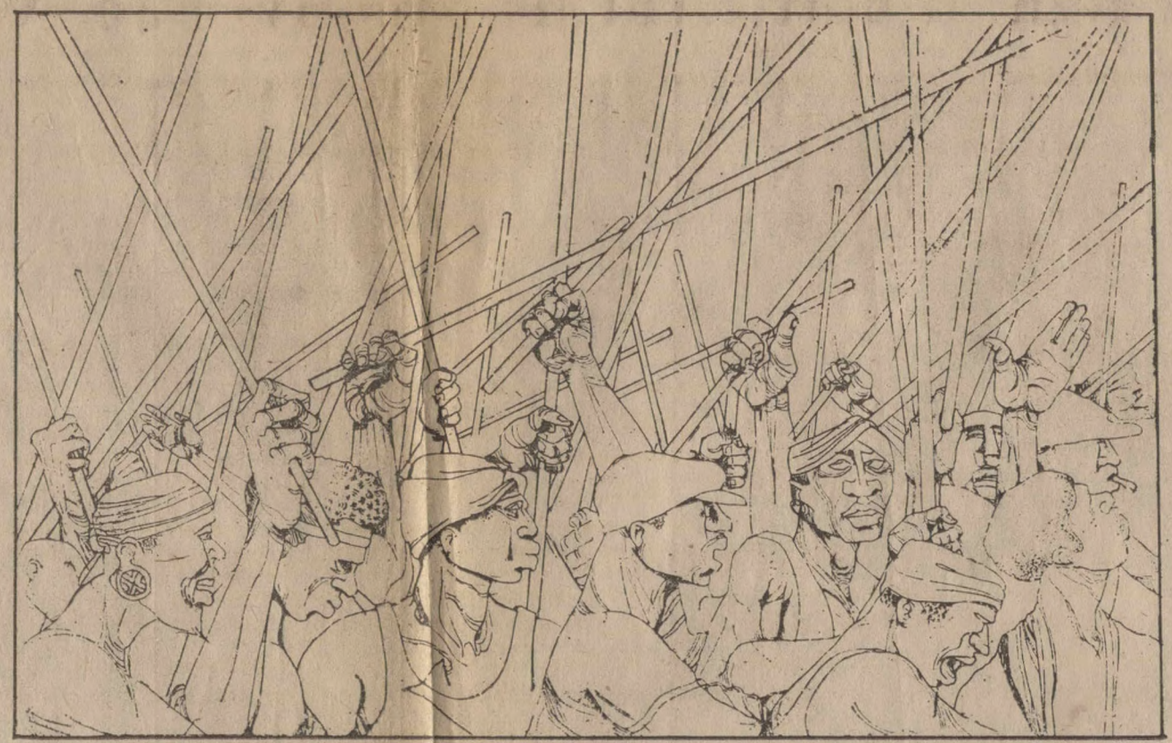
Government schools will be able to place only 130 of the 630 students.

You children that you may all remain alive
Your fathers and your mothers you must waken
And if in ruins you would not survive
Tell them you will not take what they have taken
You children that you may all remain alive.

— Bertolt Brecht: To My Countrymen.

Back to Black

HILDA BERNSTEIN knows South Africa's gaols from the inside. She and her husband Lionel walked out of the country into exile in 1964. He was the only defendant in the Rivonia treason trial to be acquitted and they fled to escape rearrest.



Hilda Bernstein's etchings: Strikers in Durban, 1973

In the decade since I left South Africa, apartheid has at last succeeded in achieving what colonialism made impossible.

A sense of their own inferiority was essential to keep races subject — something women understand very well, since the same tactic has been used against them. Which is one reason why the women's movement has been the butt of male-dominated media: frantic attempts to maintain male superiority by making women seem ridiculous not simply in the eyes of society as a whole, but also in their own eyes.

Once we women could see ourselves, not through male eyes, the end of male supremacy was in sight. Once Blacks began to see themselves, and not through the eyes of Whites, then the end of race supremacy was in sight.

Together with the encroaching tide of African liberation on their borders, apartheid made this possible. Black consciousness came after my time. We were among those still fortunate enough to be able to work together across colour lines. Now the children say: "The Government policy of apartheid has made us conscious of the fact that we are black. We have come to accept our blackness, and now we are proud of our blackness. Now we believe we should have power."

Nor should we be astonished that it is the children who lead the black revolts that began in Soweto in June. The anger and frustration of the parents has rubbed off on the children, who say: "We want to do what our parents couldn't do."

Tell them you will not take what they have taken.

They are amazingly young. Large numbers, from eight years up, have been detained in police custody. Names are never released, and frantic parents search mortuaries and police stations in attempts to trace their children. In July the Johannesburg Star found that young children had been held for three weeks at John Vorster Square, (Security Police heaquarters). The Commissioner of Police commented: "The children are probably better looked after in a police cell than they would be in a place of safety. It is not unusual to keep juveniles in cells for long periods before trials."

Another senior officer said that "only" 33 children were being "held" at Vorster Square. But some who had disappeared had been transferred to a reformatory — 48 of them — and when the parents approached the reformatory they were turned away; police took them in trucks back to the cells.

In Port Elizabeth, courts sat at night to pass sentence on 106 children for various offences. The youngest received only the lightest sentence — five cuts with a cane; he was eight years old.

They are incredibly brave. The first demonstrations, children with wide-flung arms laughing and singing, became three days and nights of unrelieved horror. A group of five women, all members of the Black Women's Federation, went into the thick of the riots to try to help mothers and families. As they drove around the township, groups of children told them where they would find the injured and the dead. They drove through smoke, shooting, and chaos, going from home to home. In one they found a bewildered woman trying to revive her little boy she thought had fainted: blood was running all over his head where he had been shot.

Frenzied women searched for their children in the chaos. When the five went to look for one of their own friends, Joyce Seroke, National Secretary of the YWCA, who, they were told, had been arrested, the police station "was like any army camp, swarming with soldiers and police, all armed; they turned us away."

Black journalists gave eye-witness accounts of the start of the troubles to an investigating judge, appointed by the Government. They insisted that shots were fired into a crowd of black schoolchildren *before* the children started throwing stones.

"Had it not been for the police I believe there would have been no violence at all. That is my firm opinion," Miss Sophie Tema, a reporter on the World, told the Judge. "The first shot was fired before the children started throwing stones. I am 100 per cent certain of this," Samuel Mzimo, an African photographer, said in his account.

It is said that 176 were killed and many more injured in those first days. The people of Soweto believe that more than 300 were shot dead in three days. The police have never published a list of casualties, nor issued any names, since the first shots were fired in June.

Nor do they publish lists of those detained under the security laws. Some organisations and papers try to compile such lists, but they are always incomplete. A few names stand out, particularly those who were officials of organisations, or worked with whites. The Christian Institute estimates that at least 300 are held under security laws, and possibly 10 times as many on various charges connected with the disturbances of the past three months.

On the lists of those known to have been detained is the name of Lindiwe Sisulu, daughter of the ANC leader Walter Sisulu, locked away for life on Robben Island. Imprisoned with Walter Sisulu is Govan Mbeki whose 15-year-old niece was shot dead by the police; and Nelson Mandela — his wife Winnie has now been detained again — and Fatima Meer, a lecturer in sociology from the Natal University.

There is Harriet Gawala, the mother of an 8-months-old baby, Xolani, who is brought to the jail at Peitermaritzburg by his grandmother once a day to be breast-fed. And Peter Magubane, South Africa's leading black photographer, detained with a nose smashed by the truncheon of a police colonel. And Dr Mamphela Ramphele, a 27-year-od black woman, superintendent of a health centre, whose detention in August came after she had represented the family at the post-mortem of another detainee, Mapetla Mohapi.

I want to write a little about Fatima Meer, Winnie Mandela, Peter Magubane, and Mapetla Mohapi.

In 1973 Fatima Meer became the first black president of the Association of Sociologists of Southern Africa. She has written three books, including A Portrait of Indian South Africans, and has lectured in the United States, in Britain and in India.

On her second trip to the United States she found herself the only South African — and Muslim at that — to be invited to an international gathering of the Methodist Church and it was there, she says, that she realised the potential power of women as a force for change.

That was in 1975 — International Women's Year. Fatima Meer came back to help establish a new Women's Federation, to link all Natal's black groups in practical activities. Among their work was the compiling and distribution of a booklet informing African women of their legal rights; and the launching of a scheme to slash the expense of school uniforms (compulsory) for blacks by buying material wholesale, making it up, and selling direct to the parents.

Fatima Meer sees the problems of race and sex as inextricably linked. "In both, physical characteristics are used as an excuse for discrimination and domination."

In July of this year, Fatima Meer received a banning order that confined her to Durban, prohibited her from publishing or being quoted, but permitted her to continue lecturing. She was refused a passport to take up a research fellowship in England. On August 12 her son, Rashid, an 18-year-old student, was detained and on August 19 her son-in-law, Bobby Mari, a 22-year-old research officer was detained.

On August 21 Fatima Meer's name appeared on the latest list of detainees.

Winnie Mandela has probably forgotten how many times she has been arrested. She has had 12 years of continuous harassment and persecution by the police, to whom — as to the people — she is a living reminder of her husband, the outstanding black leader Nelson Mandela, who survives the desolation of penal Robben Island.

First she was placed under bans, so that she lost her job. Then she was arrested many times on allegations of breaking the banning orders. In 1969, arrested and held in solitary confinement under the Terrorism Act, she endured five days and nights of continuous interrogation with no sleep. She was charged more than six months later and brought to court with 20 others (the charges concerned activities of the illegal ANC).

The case collapsed after two months when the accused were found not guilty, and discharged — then immediately re-arrested. Another five and a half months of solitary confinement, another trial another acquittal, after 491 days in prison, mostly in solitary confinement.

Again Winnie Mandela was arrested, and again and again, on trivial or made-up charges of breaking her bans, visiting her husband without all the necessary permits. In 1975 she went to prison once more after having been found guilty of communicating with another person in a Johannesburg street. (A banned person may not speak to other banned people.)

The "other person" with whom Winnie Mandela communicated also received a gaol sentence. He was a friend, Peter Magubane, who is also South Africa's leading black photographer. He joined the magazine Drum as a van-driver, but friends, both white and black, helped him to fulfil his ambition to become a photographer. In a few years he had won 14 national and international awards, and exhibited in London and Germany.

In 1967 he joined the Rand Daily Mail. He was arrested and detained in June, 1969; and released without charge or trial after 586 days in solitary confinement. He was banned in February, 1971, then went to gaol for six months for breaking his banning order by speaking to Winnie Mandela.

On August 10 this year Peter Magubane went on a routine assignment to Alexandra Township, nine miles outside Johannesburg. He was taking photographs from a car, when he was dragged out by the police and assaulted. The police then took him to the colonel in charge, who smashed a truncheon across his face, leaving him with a compound fracture of the nose. He was ordered to unload his camera and expose his film, and was beaten across the back with truncheons while he did it. He went to hospital, and prepared to sue the police for assault.

I have an English friend who used to write to Peter Magubane from time to time. Recently she received a letter from a lawyer.

"Mr Peter Magubane is again a guest of the South African Government," the lawyer writes, "this time in terms of the Internal Security Act; and in terms of the Warrant of Detention served upon him he is prohibited from absenting himself from Modderbee Prison at Benoni until December 31, 1976.

"The writer visited him on September 1, and found him to be as well as can be expected under the circumstances, and one of the messages received from him was to communicate with you and advise you that he is no longer at his normal address."

Black power — yes; for now at last apartheid has forced the Africans into a unity of black consciousness. But I believe that it will not be exclusive; that when the time comes, these determined children will recall some white names: Bram Fischer, the Afrikaner lawyer who died serving a life sentence; Denis Goldberg, serving a life sentence in Pretoria; Helen Joseph, the first person in South Africa to be put under house arrest; and Mobaris, serving 20 years; Hosey, in gaol for five years; and now David Rabkin, 10 years' gaol for preparing and distributing leaflets against apartheid.

Left : victim Joseph Mdluli, this picture was taken shortly after he died in detention. Centre : funeral march for another man who died in gaol. Right : police arrest a demonstrator. Below : Lawrence Ndzanga who died last month

Murder or suicide? Accident or design? Hilda Bernstein who fled from South Africa with her husband when he was threatened with re-arrest now feels compelled to keep a personal and intimate record of the torment, torture and tragedies inflicted upon that country's detainees

Did he fall or was he pushed?

A MAN IS taking a shower. He slips and falls, and a few days later he dies. Three weeks later another man dies in similar circumstances, through injuries sustained after slipping on a piece of soap.

Another man slips and falls down the last few steps of a flight of stairs. He lands on his buttocks and does not appear to be hurt; but eight days later he dies. Yet another man falls against a chair; soon he, too, dies.

They all died while being detained. I have kept a record of names, of dates, of how death took place, of their personal lives and their families. It is only such a record that stands between the fragmented personal memories of individual cases and the summation, which is totally different.

South African police can arrest and detain people without charging them. Section Six of the Terrorism Act authorises any police officer to detain any person whom he believes is a terrorist, or has information about terrorists. Professor van Niekerk, Professor of Law at the University of Natal, has said that any act may become an act of terrorism; the Dean of Johannesburg was alleged to have committed an act of terrorism by providing a pair of spectacles to an old lady.

Detention can be for an indefinite period and no court of law may pronounce upon the validity of any action taken under Section Six of the Act, nor order the release of any detainee.

Detention laws mean the exclusion of all contact with the outside world. The detainee is held in solitary confinement, incommunicado, without access to relatives, to lawyers or to courts.

The purpose of indefinite detention is to practise, and to conceal the practice, of systematic torture. The justification is the security of the state.

Detention without trial came into general use first under the 90 day law; then came the 180 day law, and now the Terrorism Act. Until March last year, there were about 23 known cases of unusual deaths in detention. Since then the rate has accelerated: another 19 have died.

Lawrence Ndzanga was formerly secretary of the Railway and Harbour Workers' Union, he and his wife Rita were detained last month — Lawrence died.

It was not the first time they had been detained. For nine months from May, 1969, they and more than 20 others, were held incommunicado. During that period three died: Michael Shivute on the night of his detention — death by suicide; Caleb Mayekiso, 19 days after being detained — cause of death unknown; and the Imam Abdullah Haron, four months after being detained — he fell downstairs.

After nine months the Ndzangas were charged and tried. Some weeks later the state withdrew the indictment. They were acquitted and discharged, then re-arrested and once more held in detention. Relatives sought to obtain a court order to restrain the police from assaulting or torturing them, and supported their application with affidavits they had given when they were still on trial.

Rita Ndzanga told how she was questioned: "Major Swanepoel called me by a name. I kept quiet and did not reply. Day and night is the same in this room because of the thick heavy planks covering the windows.

"I remained standing. It was late at night. One policeman came round the table and struck me. I fell to the floor, He said 'Stand up' and kicked me."

She was taken back a second time for questioning, then a third. They hit her. They made her stand, without shoes on a pile of bricks, pulled her up by her hair, dropped her on the bricks. "I fell down. . . . the same man pulled me up by my hair again.

"His hands were full of my hair. He washed his hands in the basin." She stood on the bricks, but when she fell off again they hit her. "They poured water on me. I could not stand the assault any longer. They said, 'Meid, jy moet praat!' (Girl, you must talk.)"

Lawrence Ndzanga told how he was made to stand on the bricks for prolonged periods, and that Major Swanepoel refused to let him go to the toilet, and he was forced eventually to pass water where he stood.

But Mr Justice Theron ruled the applications as being not urgent, and thought the three men who had died in detention had died from natural causes.

The second period of detention in solitary confinement lasted for five and a half months; they appeared in court once more; and after several weeks of argument were again found not guilty. They were then banned for five years.

Some time last year, both Rita and Lawrence Ndzanga were arrested again, detained, interrogated. Both were to be charged under the Terrorism Act. Rita is still in prison, and has been charged. Last month, Lawrence, according to the police, collapsed and died.

The latest to die was Matthew Mabelane. He jumped from interrogation rooms on the tenth floor of new police headquarters in Johannesburg last week. According to Major-General H. Kotze, Divisional Commissioner of Police for the Witwatersand, he "jumped on a chair, forced the window open and climbed onto a 22-inch ledge. Police officers in the room were taken by surprise. He was sitting calmly at a table moments earlier."

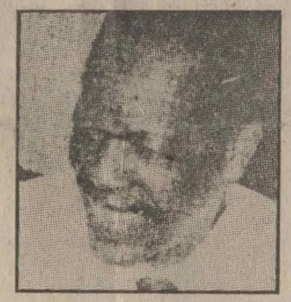
Matthew Mabelane fled to Botswana during the height of the student troubles last year and his parents (his father is a priest) reported his absence to the police because they wanted him to come back. When he tried to cross back into South Africa, the police were waiting for him.

Several of the windows on the tenth floor, known to ex-detainees as the Workshop, had been barred following the death of a young teacher, Ahmed Timol, who leaped through one of them while he was being interrogated in a sound-proof room. A lengthy inquest made headlines for weeks, but despite evidence of extensive injuries caused by blows before his death, the verdict was death by suicide.

Suicide by hanging is the most frequent reported cause of death in detention. It is routine in South African gaols to deprive prisoners of belts, shoelaces, and similar articles of clothing when they are first brought into custody, and in the circumstances it might be thought difficult for those detained to be able to hang themselves.

The means described are various. A Chinese, Ah Yan, was found hanging by socks from a waterpipe; one man was said to have hanged himself with his own jeans; another with a blanket torn into strips. I think of those heavy, felted, iron-hard prison blankets and wonder how a man, lacking any sharp instrument, could tear one into strips, and hang himself within two hours of being arrested.

I do not know which is more terrible — to believe they died in the way the police say they died, the long incredible agony of a man strangling himself with socks on a pipe, the degree of despair that can make this possible; or that death came in some other way than suicide by hanging.



Looksmart Solwandle Ngudle, they say, committed suicide by hanging. His wife went to a lawyer and an inquest was held. Then the dead man was banned: it thus became illegal to publish any statement made during his lifetime, and witnesses that Mrs Ngudles's counsel wished to call to testify to Ngudle's allegations of torture were also silenced. Counsel withdrew in protest.

At a later hearing the magistrate ruled that evidence of electric shock torture was irrelevant and refused to permit witnesses to appear. Ngudle, strong, cheerful, brave, out-going, hanged himself, said the court, and that death was not the result of any act or omission on the part of any person.

An inquest was held on James Lenkoe's death. A pathologist testified to lesions and copper deposits on his skin, caused, he believed, by electrical burns. But the magistrate refused to allow counsel to bring witnesses testifying that Lenkoe had been given electric torture, and refused to let counsel address the court on the evidence.

Nicodimus Kgoathe, who slipped in a shower, officially died from bronchial pneumonia. A doctor told the court at his inquest that he appeared to be suffering from the after-effects of concussion; and that Kgoathe's injuries were the result of an assault; linear marks on the shoulders; u-formed wounds; a wound on his eye. The magistrate said no one could be blamed for his death.

Joseph Mdluli died by the application of force to the neck; four members of the security police were charged with culpable homicide. They gave evidence that after an earlier scuffle, he suddenly stood up while being interrogated, staggered, fell hitting the back of a chair with his neck or chest, and died an hour later.

In spite of evidence of forensic experts that his injuries included a fractured cartilege, extensive bruising on neck, forehead, scalp and body, and three fractured ribs, and that he appeared to have been dead much longer than the period suggested, the four police were acquitted.

The Judge President of Natal, who had heard the case, said there was a conflict in the evidence of police and doctors. If the police evidence was to be accepted, the four accused had left the room half an hour before Mdluli died. "If he had died of these injuries in the morning after a scuffle with the four accused, all the policemen in the building would have had to enter an elaborate conspiracy to conceal his death till that evening. The court could not accept that such a thing could possibly have happened."

I contend that the conspiracy surrounding the deaths in detention is far more widespread than the one the Judge President could not accept.

Greetings Barbara Shall ring you —

Two years ago : Young people of the Johannesburg black township of Soweto protest against apartheid.

Young way back to Soweto ...

HILDA BERNSTEIN reports on young blacks who, having fled South Africa after riots were put down two years ago, are at a special school in Tanzania.

A NARROW track of deep red soil runs between tall feathery grasses and the dried stalks of maize and sorghum. The Land-Rover pushes the grass down and tiny black and scarlet birds dart up. There are brilliantly-coloured butterflies among the sunflowers.

The farm, Masimbo, used to be a 250-acre sisal plantation, not far from the town of Morogoro in Tanzania. Behind the town is a range of mountains. It is a magnificent setting.

The farm, with all its buildings, has been donated by the Tanzanian Government to the African National Congress of South Africa, to establish a high school for the many students who have fled from their country since the uprising at Soweto in June, 1976. Two years later they are still making the long journey up through Africa, and are scattered in many countries. But high school students from South Africa—now in Botswana, Swaziland, Angola or Mozambique—will come to Masimbo to resume their education. Already there are about 60 people, male and female, living at the farm, their ages ranging from 14 to 28.

These are the young people who faced bullets and armoured cars in Soweto, Natal, the Cape and elsewhere when the revolt spread. They saw their brothers and sisters mown down beside them — estimates from different sources say at least 500 died in the first few days, and thousands were injured. Although some fled simply to escape detention, torture and possible long imprisonment, most are strongly motivated.

They left South Africa to try to get military training, and they intend to return.

Tembi : The police came and questioned the school principal about me. From then on I did not sleep at home. Twice they took my mother away, for questioning. My teacher said, 'you had better go.' But to be away from my mother for years ... no, I could not go. But eventually I decided. My mother gave me money and I crossed the border into Swaziland.

Sikosi : I was at high school in Bophutatswana (a Bantustan). In August 1976, we decided to burn down the Bantustan parliament building. We met together and we burned it, totally. The police were searching for the leaders. Many students hid.

Nkosazana : Police started shooting at small children of five and six years, the children retaliated by throwing stones, then there was more shooting. It went on for many days. My brothers were arrested. One is still in detention. I decided to leave, and I went to Botswana.

There is no electric light. The sky is brilliant as we walk to Luanda house to meet all the students. 'Welcome to the House of Exile,' reads a sign over the door. The students sit on wooden benches; a single lamp defines a few faces and deepens the shadows. Then they start to sing. They sang Freedom songs. Africa in my heart. Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika.

The day begins at 5.30, with PT. Then there is sweeping, cleaning, bathing and breakfast. The girls are beautiful, healthy-looking and immaculately clean, with freshly washed and pressed clothes.

After breakfast the pupils are at school until lunch at 1.45. On alternate afternoons there is agriculture or sport, with supper at 5.15, followed by study. There is a rota for cleaning and for preparing the meals.

The plans for the new high school to be built at Masimbo have already been prepared by a Danish architect who is going to spend a year there to supervise the first stage. The Dutch and Norwegian Governments have donated preliminary funds for the project, and Mozambique has offered to build a technical block.

Ultimately there will be six separate units each housing 144 students, with its own services and kitchens, and surrounded by vegetable and fruit gardens which the students will maintain with the object of making the school self-sufficient in food.

It cannot become reality without international support. Much money is needed to build and maintain the school, and for the trained personnel of all kinds who cannot be supplied solely from the ranks of South African refugees. There are many difficulties to overcome, many personal difficulties.

'This is not a normal boarding school,' we were told. 'These students have come to live in exile. They want to complete their studies, but they have one objective—to return to South Africa.'

No home in the homelands

Voice

HILDA BERNSTEIN in exile, marks South African women's day

I WAS BORN in London, but lived in Johannesburg for thirty years. It was my home in the sense not just of being the place where I lived, but the place that fully embodied my whole life: marriage, children, friends, work. It was the centre also for whatever I could give in commitment and love to those in the world around me.

When I left my home in 1964, eventually to come and live in London, people spoke to me of "returning", and I was secretly angry. All cities – and most towns – have undergone such changes in post-war decades as to render them unknown to those who left them. But what really upset me was that people assumed that changing countries was as simple as slipping off one coat and putting on another. And that to abandon your home was simply a material loss: you leave one house and find another elsewhere.

John Berger, writing in *New Society* on what constitutes a home, described the emigration, forced or chosen, of peoples across national frontiers, or from village to metropolis, as the quintessential experience of our time.

This violent transport of human beings on an unprecedented scale, wrote, was prophesied by the opening of the slave trade. In traditional societies, home was "the heart of the real". Without a home one was not only shelterless, but also a lost non-being, in reality.

Emigration is not simply a physical change of place, climate, view: not just the act of crossing frontiers, but also "undoing the very meaning of the world and at its most extreme – abandoning oneself to the unreal, which is absurd."

The most terrifying undoing of the meaning of the world, the utmost in absurdity, is happening within South Africa today, with the forced removals of millions of people from their homes. These mass removals that affect both urban and rural areas are aimed at the absolute separation of the various racial groups. The final goal is total political segregation under permanent white domination.

Whether they are moved singly, or as part of a group, each removal is an individual tragedy beginning with the stonewall of an official decree and ending in the destruction of home and family.

There is no way to compensate for this, even if – and the opposite is true – the substitute had a better form materially than the one left behind. You have been dispossessed. You have been robbed of what was yours, the known and understood, the landscapes that seep into the mind's eye, the circle of neighbours and the cycle of domestic events and patterns of intercourse that even the poorest societies construct around themselves. You must begin your life all over again, under totally alien and hostile conditions.

Forced emigration – "relocation" in South Africa – is a process of obliteration. It is more than community relations that are destroyed when communities are uprooted, scattered, and relocated in remote, stony lands. Forced emigration obliterates tradition, continuity, culture, history. Among strangers, there is no way to reconstruct what has been destroyed.

This must have been the recognition of a man named Sekole, a migrant worker and the father of six. He belonged to a tribe called the Batlokwa who having twice moved in the past had finally settled and built their homes with schools and shops in the northern Transvaal. They were told they were to be moved to a place called Kromhoek, a desolate and barren tract of land in the Levowa bantustan. For two years they resisted the removals; then government trucks with armed police and dogs arrived, forcing families onto the trucks. Officials demolished most of the houses, clinics and public amenities, and chopped down trees.

Sekole had been away, working. He returned to find his own house still standing, but his family and possessions gone. Rather then allow officials to demolish his home on which he had spent his life's savings, he demolished it himself, then hanged himself in the shell.

But despite everything, almost evey community threatened with removal resists in whatever ways it can. The name Crossroads has come to symbolise resistance, particularly of women, to forced removals. Crossroads is the squatters' camp built of sacking and corrugated iron, of cardboard boxes and flattened tin drums, established by the families of wage-earners employed in Cape Town.

Fighting off demolition (the women sat down in front of bulldozers and refused to move) Crossroads became a creative community with its own committees; the women dramatised their struggle in theatre and took it to other parts of the country. They adopted different strategies to cope with attacks on their homes.

At another camp, known as KTC, families resisted the repeated demolition of their shelters; they clashed with police as the camps were flattened twice and building materials destroyed in bonfires.

The physical power of the regime is such that in most cases, despite long battles, in the end the communities are uprooted and cast away into those places the authorities tell them are "the homelands." They know that the shacks hold more of the true heart of their homes than those areas of banishment in the bantustans. They fight to return, sometimes over hundreds of miles on foot, for their need to be home.

People ask me: would you go back if you could? Berger writes that every migrant knows in his heart of hearts that it is impossible to return even if it is physically possible; emigration changes you so deeply that the only hope of recreating a centre now is to make that centre the entire earth, so that eventually the substitute for the shelter of a home will be our collective conscious presence in history, and we will live again in the heart of the real.

So what do I consider to be my home – Johannesburg? Not any more. London? Not really. If it is anywhere at all it is in the dust and sacking of Crossroads, in the freezing mud and barbed wire of the camp at KTC; or on the site of that demolished house with the bones of the man who hanged himself.

Jurgen Schadeberg

"Among strangers there is no way to reconstruct what has been destroyed"

Once a Leper Colony, Robben Island Now Holds South Africa's Political Outcasts

Inside Apartheid's Gulag Archipelago

BY HILDA BERNSTEIN

LONDON—Small and rocky, wind-swept Robben Island rises from the Atlantic just outside the entrance to South Africa's Cape Town harbor. Once, lepers were sent there. The surrounding miles of ocean made prisoners of the outcasts and effectively protected their countrymen on the mainland from infection.

The island still serves South Africa as a kind of leper colony, though now the contagion isolated there is not bacteriological, but political. Today, Robben Island is the white government's maximum-security prison for non-Europeans. Thirteen hundred men and women—blacks, Indians and people of mixed race, the so-called coloreds—are held there, 800 on outright political charges, 500 for other reasons.

Their physical isolation is reinforced by a regulation that prohibits prisoners from receiving any news of the outside world for the entire duration of their sentence. Moreover, since few visitors are permitted and since the South African news media publishes no descriptions of prison conditions, the outside world knows little of life on Robben Island.

Recently, however, I spoke with two men now free after serving long terms on the island. Both are South African-born Indians: Indries Naidoo, who spent 10 years on Robben, and Mac Mararaj, who served 12. The portrait they paint of life in South Africa's toughest prison is chilling, indeed.

The penal colony mirrors South African society: Every authority figure is white. Every aspect of daily life is governed by regulations that demand different treatment for the members of each racial category and which distinguish between the male and female members of each.

Naidoo, whose father was an adopted son of Mahatma Gandhi, grew up in Johannesburg, where his family home was a local center of political activity. In 1964, he was arrested, convicted of attempted sabotage and sent to Robben Island. Mararaj was arrested at about the same time and, along with four other men, convicted of attempting to revive *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation), the military wing of the African National Congress, a nonwhite political party suppressed in the early 1960s. His 12-year sentence was the shortest meted out to his group.

Following their release from prison, both men were "banned," that is, they were restricted to their homes by government order and forbidden contact with anyone but members of their immediate families. Ultimately, however, Naidoo and Mararaj managed to slip away and—with the covert aid of friends—made their way to London.

Both now recall their prison years as a period of almost unremitting humiliation and torment. On Robben Island, even such elemental items as food and clothing are strictly apportioned along racial lines. For example, colored and Indian prisoners are entitled to a daily bread ration, but until 1972 blacks were not. Since then, the African inmates have been given about four ounces of bread twice each week. Similarly, colored and Indian prisoners receive a portion of jam or syrup and about two ounces of sugar daily. Blacks get no jam or syrup at all and only about one-and-one-half ounces of sugar.

Since prisoners of all three nonwhite racial categories eat and work together, their unequal diets are manifest to all. "We would sit in the quadrangle eating the same meal, side by side," says Mararaj. "But I would have a full tablespoon of sugar on my porridge and the African next to me only a half. I would be given bread every day, he would be given only a soft, watery pap (porridge made from cornmeal). For years, the Africans were not permitted even a scrap of bread. But it was illegal for me to share one speck of sugar or my piece of bread with my African comrade."

The allocation of clothing is yet another reminder that on Robben Island some nonwhites are even more unequal than others. During Cape Town's bitter winters, which often bring dripping fog and high winds, warm clothing is not just a luxury, but a necessity.

Yet, according to Mararaj, "In winter we (Indians and coloreds) were given long trousers, shoes and socks and a felt hat. The Africans had open sandals, no socks and shorts all year round. You are there, side by side. You come under the same lash. But still there is this terrible discrimination—no one can conceive how bitter it is, no one."

Strangely enough, housing is the one area of life on Robben island where race is not the overriding consideration. Instead, prisoners are divided according to their politics.

When an inmate arrives on the island, he is assigned to one of four levels: A, B, C or D. Prisoners assigned to the D level receive the fewest internal privileges. For example, they are allowed to mail and receive only one letter and have but one visitor every six months. All political prisoners are automatically consigned to the D level, while all other inmates—including murderers—have their cases considered individually.

Then, whatever their racial category, most prisoners are assigned to a section of communal cells for the general prisoners; one for those convicted under South Africa's notorious Terrorism Act; and one for inmates from Namibia, who are not allowed any contact with South African prisoners. Recently, another section was added to house men and women convicted during the wave of political trials that has occurred during the past year. Apparently, authorities hope to prevent these new arrivals from passing fresh news of the outside world to long-time inmates.

About 40 prominent D-level prisoners are confined in so-called single cells. They include Nelson Mandela, 59, president of the proscribed African National Congress, Walter Sisulu, 63, the party's general secretary, Govan Mbeki, the group's national chairman and Andre Miangeni, an influential party member. All are serving life sentences.

The cells in which they are confined measure seven by seven-and-one-half feet and open onto a courtyard. Single-cell prisoners may never work near or speak to inmates held in communal housing. Mac Mararaj, who spent most of his 12 years in the single cells, recalls what it was like:

"Our first job was breaking stones with a four-pound hammer. Every day, we were taken from our cells into the enclosed yard, and there we sat in the same place week after week. We never saw the outside world, never a blade of grass, just the quadrangle into which our cells led and a patch of sky. We were even spaced out and never permitted to speak to each other."

Indries Naidoo, on the other hand, passed his 10-year sentence in communal cells, where crowding rather than personal isolation was the major problem: "We were 80 or 90 in a cell built for no more than 25, so we tried to maintain the utmost discipline. We formed a committee, but this was declared illegal. We were never allowed to speak on behalf of others. When we made a complaint it had to be 'I,' but still we said 'We.' Then, they wouldn't listen to us.

"For the first five years, most of us worked in the quarries. We had to break stones, to fulfill a certain quantity of work each day. If not, we were punished at the weekend by the deprivation of three meals.

"In the first years many of us had this punishment. I for one was never able to fulfill my quota. It was impossible. Others helped me or I would steal from the previous day's stones. In 1971, the quarries were flooding; they had gone below sea level. So, we were employed bringing stones from the quarries to the prison yard itself. Quarry work now is supposed to be only a form of punishment."

Most prisoners, however, suffer far less from physical abuse than they do from their white jailers' almost constant psychological assaults. For example, South Africa's Prisons Act obliges authorities to allow all inmates to remain in contact with their families. Yet over the years, such communication has been severly restricted.

"More and more, we were cut off completely from the outside world, even from our families," says Mararaj. "I once received a letter where all that was left was the address of the sender. The entire letter had been cut away, the blank paper between what had been paragraphs held the whole page together, and at one end was the signature of the sender. But that counted as a letter received, when I was allowed only one every six months.

"At first they cut letters going out of Robben Island in the same way. But now they make it seem as though they have not been censored. They make prisoners rewrite them, leaving out certain sections, and if, after the second or third time, they are not satisfied, they won't send it. But the letters prisoners receive—they just use the scissors.

"When my wife, Tim, visited me she told me she was leaving the country on an exit permit. I then asked the commandant, as she is leaving, please let me combine my next three or four letters (each letter is limited to 500 words) so I can deal with all sorts of family problems, misunderstandings between us.

"He said: Yes, it was okay. I wrote a five-page letter and was assured it had been sent. All those years I believed she had received it and perhaps understood . . . until I came here. Yes, she had received bits and pieces of my letter, all cut up. She never knew what I had really wanted her to know."

Even when family members are allowed to visit an inmate, watchful guards are careful to see that the absolute prohibition against outside news is maintained. Any remark that does not relate directly to family affairs automatically terminates a visit. A family member may not, for example, say, "There's been an earthquake in Iran or an election in the United States."

In time, however, prisoners learn to interpret certain signs of outside turmoil. For instance, when magazines circulate with an extraordinarily large number of articles clipped from their pages, it is usually a sign that political activity has increased in South Africa. Moreover, such periods are usually accompanied by increased brutality on the part of the guards.

Such physical abuse, which once included outright torture, has been moderated of late by United Nations, Red Cross and Amnesty International complaints and in response to protests by the prisoners themselves. However, when one group of inmates recently staged a hunger strike, they were convicted of "endangering their own health" and given longer sentences.

Such punishments are part of Robben Island's incredibly intricate system of internal discipline, which specifies more than 20 types of punishable insubordination, including: disrespect, negligence at work, conversing without permission, singing, whistling, lodging a false or frivolous complaint and acting in a way contrary to good order and discipline.

Inmates guilty of such infractions can be put in solitary confinement, deprived of food, whipped or demoted to a lower classification level. For literate prisoners and those in single cells, the latter penalty is particularly feared, for it automatically deprives them of one of their most cherished privileges —the right to study.

Robben Island inmates are sometimes allowed to take certain correspondence courses, though they must pay all fees themselves. For many of the better-educated men, work and study are the only ways of maintaining sanity.

Please Turn to Page 6, Col. 1

Drawing by Robert Fryer

Los Angeles Times
Opinion
Interpretation Background
Editorials
PART IV SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 1978

A white South African writer and political activist now living in London, Hilda Bernstein is a frequent contributor to the Manchester Guardian. She is the author of "The World That Was Ours," an account of her family's political activities, "For Their Triumphs and Their Tears," a book about South African women, and of a forthcoming biography of Steve Biko, the late black student leader. Another version of this article appeared in the current issue of the weekly In These Times.

Meanwhile, Gulag Itself Spawns a Bitter Humor

It is hard to imagine that any people subjected to the sort of repression that occurs on Robben Island would ever find anything political in the least bit amusing. But in the Soviet Union, where the infamous Gulag Archipelago still casts a chilling shadow, people have made their situation the subject of countless comic anecdotes, some of which are gathered here.

They were drawn from a forthcoming book, "Forbidden Laughter," published by Almanac House of Los Angeles. This volume was compiled and edited by Emil Draitser, a writer and recent immigrant from the Soviet Union, and translated by Jon Pariser, who teaches Russian and Russian literature at Caltech.

The significance of these short—often folksy—stories has been best described by Andrei Sinyavsky, the noted Russian writer and literary critic: "No matter how you suppress the anecdote, it only gathers strength from repression—not through the power of malice, but through humor and enlightenment. From the 30 years of darkness (Stalin's time) right down to the present day, these anecdotes shine like stars in the night. The anecdote demonstrates in its purest form the miracle of art, which only takes advantage of the brutality and fury of dictators."

A tour guide in Moscow's Museum of the October Revolution brings his group to a halt in front of two skeletons—one large and one small—and offers this explanation:

"Before you comrades is the skeleton of that immortal hero of the civil war, Vanity Ivanovich Chapaev. The smaller skeleton next to it is that of the legendary Vasily Ivanovich Chapaev as a child."

The scene is Lenin's funeral: His coffin has been placed on a platform above which hangs a banner bearing the slogan, "He Freed Us From the Chains of Capitalism."

One of the mourners, a Jew, turns to his companion and says, "That's true Moshe. I still remember how they took the gold watch chain my papa gave me."

One day, Stalin discovered that his pipe was missing. Enraged, he summoned Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria, head of the secret police, and screamed, "Find it, Lavrenti Pavlovich, or you'll answer with your head."

Shaken, Beria scurried from Stalin's office, and two hours later called back to report: "Forty-seven suspects have been arrested and I've put my chief deputy in charge of their interrogation."

The next day, Stalin's pipe cleaners also were missing and, once again, Beria was summoned. "What's going on around here?" demanded Stalin, eyeing his associate with ominous suspicion.

Beria fled the office and a short time later called back to report, "Eighty-five suspects have been arrested and I'm personally directing the questioning."

The next morning the lost objects were all discovered by a cleaning woman, who found they had all simply fallen behind the office couch. Stalin called Beria and said, "You can halt your investigation, Lavrenti."

"What a pity, Comrade Stalin," replied Beria. "All but one of the suspects have already confessed."

During one of his speeches, Stalin exclaimed: "I am prepared to give my blood for the cause of the working class —drop by drop."

Suddenly, the crowd stirred as a note was passed to the podium. The leader opened it and read, "Beloved Comrade Stalin: Why drag things out? Give it all at once."

Citizen Rabinowitz showed up at the annual May Day demonstration with a huge placard that read: "Thank You Comrade Stalin for My Happy Childhood."

Taken aback, the secretary of the local party organization approached him and said, "Rabinowitz, what's the matter with you? You're already deep into old age. Why, when you were a child, Comrade Stalin hadn't even been born."

Replied Rabinowitz, "That's what I'm thankful for."

During the 1937 purge, two rabbits meet on the road.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" one rabbit asks.

"Haven't you heard the rumor?" the other replied. "All camels are to be castrated."

"But we're not camels," said the first rabbit.

"Of course not," the second one said. "But after you're caught and castrated, who's going to believe it?"

John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev ran a foot race. The next day, Pravda published the following account:

"Our beloved Nikita Sergeivich Khrushchev won a very respectable second in the race. The American President, on the other hand, barely managed to arrive at the finish line in next-to-last place."

Brezhnev dies and goes to hell, where the devil greets him by saying, "As a prominent Communist, Leonid, you may choose your eternal torture. Let's take a look around and see if anything catches your fancy."

As they stroll through hell, Brezhnev sees Adolf Hitler boiling in a tub of oil and Josef Stalin stretched out on a rack. Suddenly, they turn a corner and find Nikita Khrushchev sitting with Brigitte Bardot on his lap.

"That's it," cries Brezhnev. "I'll take Khrushchev's torture."

"No, no," replies the devil. "It isn't Khrushchev who's being tortured; it's Bardot."

One day, a Jew showed up at the local KGB office and requested permission to emigrate to Israel.

"But citizen," asked the KGB agent, "why do you want to leave the best country in the entire world?"

"There are two reasons," answered the Jew. "First when my neighbor gets drunk, he bangs on the door of my apartment and screams, 'Just wait until we put an end to the Soviet regime; then, we'll take care of all you Jews.' Well, I don't want to wait around until that happens."

"You shouldn't pay attention to such nonsense," said the agent, smiling. "We all know that the Soviet regime will last forever."

"That's my second reason," said the Jew.

A certain citizen was brought to trial and charged with having called a Soviet government minister an idiot. The citizen was, of course, convicted and sentenced to 15 years at hard labor and forfeiture of all his possessions.

Hearing of the case, a Western correspondent arranged to interview the presiding judge. "I fail to understand why this man was given such a severe sentence," said the correspondent. "After all, according to Soviet law, the maximum penalty for slander is six months in jail."

"Yes, that is the law," replied the judge. "But this man was not sentenced for slander, but for revealing a state secret!"

Question: How would you describe the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.?

Answer: The Supreme Soviet is a collective organ of Soviet authority, consisting of two types of people—those who are absolutely incapable of anything, and those who are capable of absolutely everything."

INSIDE OPINION

The Tet Offensive, which occurred 10 years ago this week, fulfilled a classic maxim: The North Vietnamese lost the battle, but won the war, Page 2.

Also in this section:

The truth about the Carter tax cut is that it doesn't really cut it; As far as Israel is concerned, the ball is back in the Egyptian court, Page 2.

Few environmentalists like to admit it, but the Concorde is now a regular part of our lives and no one seems the worse for it; The Marston affair has spawned proposals for selection of U.S. attorneys by merit—they should be ignored, Page 3.

Editorials and letters, Page 4.

Op-Ed, Page 5.

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