

The most effective weapon the Special Branch of the South African Police have yet devised against their political opponents has been detention in solitary confinement without trial, first under the 90-day law which was suspended in January 1965 and then under the 180-day detention clause which became a permanent part of South African law in the 1965 session of the South African Parliament.

Detention in solitary confinement, often accompanied by physical torture or the 'statue' torture method taken over from the Portuguese political police PIDE, has confronted political prisoners with a new and strange situation with which many have been unable to cope, often because they were taken by surprise and did not know what to expect. Of the 1000-odd prisoners detained under the 90-day law, no fewer than 241 were eventually "persuaded" to give evidence for the State in criminal proceedings. In addition, an unknown number of those eventually charged also made statements to the police, some of which were used in evidence against them.

At the same time, it is only fair to point out that hundreds of those detained endured every form of torture which was used against them without breaking down - some even sacrificing their lives rather than betray the movement or their comrades. Many of those who 'didn't talk' were eventually released because the police could get nothing out of them and there was no point in keeping them in prison any longer. Others equally brave were convicted on the testimony of informers and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. But though their sufferings have been extended, yet they have been able to go to jail with their heads high and their spirit unbroken, confident in the knowledge that they have proved true to themselves and the movement.

It is because the prisoner's attitude is largely the key to the situation in which he finds himself on arrest under the detention without trial law that these notes have been drawn up to help prospective detainees prepare for the ordeal which may overtake them at any time. The notes are based on the experiences not only of South African prisoners, but also of political prisoners in other countries where similar methods of interrogation and torture have been operated. Circumstances differ from country to country. In some countries political prisoners can automatically expect torture and even death, and so to some extent their mental attitudes are simplified because they are confronted with no alternatives. Whether they talk or don't talk, they can expect the worst. Perhaps the more varied and more subtle methods used in other countries have proved more effective in extracting information. However, one fact is common to all prisoners in all circumstances - the prisoner with the greatest political conviction and determination is best able to survive all that the police can bring against him. There is no substitute for the faith of the prisoner in the future, in his movement and in his comrades. The prisoner who regards his cell as merely another battlefield where he is prepared to carry on the struggle against his enemies to the bitter end is the one most likely to achieve victory.

During the 1960 emergency, political prisoners found that their strongest weapon against the police was the morale engendered by association and common action with their fellow-prisoners. The police learned the lesson, and detention in solitary confinement was the result. The prisoner is kept in his cell for

23 hours out of 24, not allowed to receive visitors from members of his family or his lawyer, not allowed access to the courts, not allowed to read books or newspapers, starved of all information or contact except that allowed to him by the warders or the police. Under ~~the~~ 180-day law political prisoners are called 'State witnesses' and are supposed to be treated as awaiting trial prisoners. But the extent to which the privileges available to ordinary awaiting trial prisoners are extended to the political prisoners is entirely dependent on the decision of the prison governor, advised by the Special Branch. For all practical purposes, 180-day detention appears to be simply 90-day detention doubled. The prisoner is on his own and can rely only on his own resources to see him through.

At the outset, it is necessary to emphasise once again the rule that, however, circumstances may differ from cell to cell, from one prisoner to another, it should be the aim of the prisoner to give away no information whatsoever, either about himself or about others. We repeat: NO INFORMATION. It is information the police want. It is your duty to deny them what they want.

Hitherto this rule has been applied more strictly to mean that a prisoner, once arrested for any reason, should refuse to make any statement of any kind other than to give his name and address. This rule still applies to a prisoner who is arrested on a charge and who is to appear in court in due course. Any statement he makes may be used in evidence against him. By speaking he may help to incriminate himself. A person who is charged or to be charged is not in the same position as a 90 or 180-day detainee. He can ask for the services of a lawyer, and should refuse to make any statement of any sort until he has seen his lawyer.

But the detainee who is arrested on suspicion or for purposes of extracting information is in a different position. For him the rule "no information" still applies, but there may be circumstances in which he cannot avoid saying something. Sometimes, indeed, it may help him to say something.

A person who is arrested, for example, in the course of a routine round-up and who can obtain release by giving an acceptable explanation about his movements should do so if he can get away with it. For instance, the police may arrest someone of whose identity or involvement they are uncertain. If such a person can produce an excuse which will conceal his true identity or cover up the extent of his involvement, there is no reason why he should not do so. But he should never give an explanation which may deflect suspicion from himself on to someone else who may then stand in danger of arrest. Nor should he give the sort of excuse which only arouses suspicion, or which is so blatantly false as to land him in deeper water than he was in before. However, if he can 'talk' himself out of trouble without giving anything away, well and good.

However, we are more concerned with the cause of the detainee of whose identity the police are in no doubt, about whom they already know something and want to know more, or about whom they know everything and from whom they want a signed confession. It is people in circumstances such as these who have been the main victims of detention, various interrogatory techniques and outright torture. Knowledge of some of the techniques used by the police may help them to face whatever situation may arise.

The common factor in all detentions nowadays is solitary confinement. This in itself can prove to be a most insidious form of torture. Left to himself

for 23 hours a day, with no occupation other than his thoughts, with no contact with the outside world, a prisoner tends to lose his sense of identity, and become dissociated from reality. Many prisoners after arrest have been left to "stew" for some days, sometimes even weeks. No one apart from the occasional warder comes near them. The warders themselves are hostile and don't speak to them. This initial period of isolation is meant to heighten the prisoner's anxiety at his fate, to unnerve him for the first session of interrogation.

After a period of solitary confinement, the prisoner begins to undergo mental changes which are often completely beyond his control. Some people can endure only a short period of solitary confinement, some can go on for years - there is no means of telling beforehand how a person is going to react. Some of our seemingly most determined and experienced comrades have cracked within the first week - perhaps the arrest was the last straw after a long period of strain and tension. Other comrades have endured solitary confinement for month after month without cracking. A person's physical and mental characteristics will have something to do with his reaction to solitary confinement, but do not always tell the whole story.

Sooner or later, however, most prisoners begin to break down under solitary confinement. The prisoner's mind becomes dazed and confused. Often this is accompanied by physical upsets: sleeplessness, nightmares, an uncontrollable tremor of the hands and other symptoms.

After a period of solitary confinement, the visit of the interrogator can come almost as a relief. The prisoner has been worried about what questions are going to be put to him, about how much the Special Branch know of him and his activities, about what charges, if any, may be preferred against him. The uncertainty and suspense are the worst feature of solitary confinement, and the prisoner hopes the visit of the interrogator will clear everything up. But he may well be disappointed. In the first interview, and in subsequent ones, the interrogator often puts no questions at all. Instead, he confronts the detainee with: "Are you prepared to answer questions?" If the detainee says "No", he may simply go away again. The interrogator may come again a week or two later and repeat the same question, and until the detainee replies "Yes, I am prepared to answer questions", he may have no specific questions put to him. The interrogator gives the impression that he is not in a hurry; he has plenty of time to let the detainee sit and worry behind bars.

There are other times when the police cannot afford to waste time and are under orders to extract information as speedily as possible. In these cases daily visits may be paid to the prisoner, who is plied with specific questions and pressed to cooperate. Sometimes visits may be paid twice a day. It is when the police are desperate for information that they resort to torture. This can take two forms - either outright physical torture by means of beatings, electric shock treatment etc. or the statue torture method taken over from the Portuguese secret police PIDE. Where a prisoner must face physical torture, he can only bear in mind that in Nazi Germany, Portugal, Spain, Algeria, and other countries political prisoners endured the most ghastly tortures and beatings, on a scale worse than most of our comrades have had to endure, sometimes extended over weeks and months, often ending

in death. Yet thousands endured this torture without betraying their comrades or themselves. Each prisoner must remind himself of the standard set by our leaders like Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Denis Goldberg and others in the Rivonia trial and in other trials who have demonstrated that they were prepared to die for their ideals. Nor must we forget those who have willingly given their lives in the struggle - Mini Khaba and Khayinga, Looksmart Solwandle, Babla Saloojee. Our movement has produced its heroes who can take their place beside men like Julius Fucik, Henri Alleg and many, many others in many lands who have faced all and endured all without flinching, ready to make the supreme sacrifice if called upon to do so.

The "statue" torture has in many cases proved to be more effective even than physical torture. The prisoner is kept standing, often within a small circle marked out on the floor, for hour after hour while plied incessantly with questions by a team of interrogators. If the prisoner tries to sit, he is hauled to his feet; if he steps out of the circle he is pushed back. He is allowed a minimum of time to eat and perform his functions, and is then forced to stand again, and to remain standing until he drops with fatigue. He is brought round and made to stand again. The interrogators are hostile, brutal, vicious. And they work in shifts, so that while the prisoner gradually tires, they always appear fresh. Very few prisoners can survive statue torture for long. There comes a time when the combination of physical fatigue and mental despair produces a breakdown, and the prisoner declares himself willing to make a statement.

The only answer to torture is to refuse to submit to it. The secret of its success is that the prisoner is really punishing himself, and it is left to him to decide when he has had enough. Because the police are doing nothing to him apart from questioning him, he has no focus of resistance, nothing to fight except his own growing weariness. The prisoner should rather invite physical assault by refusing to stand and if necessary even attacking his torturers. He should go to the lavatory, pretend to be ill or unconscious. He must realise that the longer he stands, the more vulnerable he becomes, and should try in every way possible to put an end to the situation as soon as he can.

The police have obtained successes even without the use of torture or the "statue" treatment. One of their most effective techniques is to come to a prisoner and say: "we know all". They will then give indication of some knowledge which astounds the prisoner and leads him to believe he has been betrayed by others and that there is not much point in denying things that are already known. He may even be told that "so and so" has made a statement, so why should the prisoner not do so likewise. Or he may be told more directly that "so and so" has made a statement directly implicating the prisoner, and advises him to "own up".

First of all, the prisoner must beware of police trickery. The police may know something, but not all. If they know all, why are they still asking for information? Then the police claim that "so and so" has talked may simply be a lie to undermine the prisoner's confidence in his comrades and his cause.

The prisoner must say to himself: "If you know all, there is no point in my telling you any more". The truth is that when the police say "we know all" they usually do not. The trials have shown that their knowledge is very defective. It is filled in only by the detainee who talks.

The police also try various types of bribery against the prisoner. They say: "Think of yourself. Save yourself. You can get yourself out of this mess. Where has politics got you? You have been used by the Jews and the Indians. Now they have deserted you and run away. They can't help you any longer. Why should you suffer while they go free?" They promise release if the prisoner makes a statement. Even convicted prisoners have been promised a remission of sentence if only they will make a statement or turn State witness. The police appeal to a man's anxiety about his family or a woman's concern for her children. They will even threaten to arrest wife and children if a prisoner refuses to make a statement.

These promises and threats are usually lies and tricks to undermine a prisoner's morale and get him to "cooperate". The promises of release are not kept - many of those who made statements eventually found that those very statements were used to convict them. Others found that although they made statements, they were still placed on trial and convicted on the basis of evidence given by somebody else....somebody, perhaps who had been induced to "talk" on being confronted with the prisoner's own statement in the first place. Convicted prisoners who gave evidence for the State remained in jail afterwards and were forgotten.

Every political prisoner must remember, that even if it is true that others have betrayed him, that is no reason why he must betray them in turn. Even if the police do know all - and however shattering this news may be - they still need something that the prisoner can withhold from them: his confirmation, his statement or his evidence. It is one thing to know something, often quite another to provide it in court. The prisoner must never tell himself: "The game is up". The struggle for liberation is not a game, and it is never finished or hopeless. There is no "forever" in jail. However gloomy the immediate situation may appear, the prisoner must remember the lessons of history. Setbacks are followed by new advances. The struggle for liberation from the oppressor can never be stopped and can never be wrong.

The political prisoner who collapses spiritually and decides to make a "clean breast" of it must live with himself for the rest of his life, despised by friend and foe alike. No one has respect for the turncoat or the collaborator. The Quislings and Laval's and our own Beylvelde's and Mtolos have earned the contempt and hatred of history. Someday there will be a reckoning with them.

At the same time, we must realize that we are dealing with human beings, and not with machines. Reaction to solitary confinement, interrogation and torture differs from one person to another. The circumstances of one prisoner will differ from those of another, making him more vulnerable to pressure. Most people have a breaking point. With some it may come quickly, with some it may be delayed for months or even years. Some, sensing that they are about to break

down, prefer to commit suicide rather than betray. All that we can urge upon our comrades is that they should carry on the struggle to the limit of endurance, that they should retain their confidence in the ultimate triumph of their cause, that they should be fortified by the knowledge that they fight for justice and freedom while their captors and enemies represent all that is evil and oppressive in society.

A prisoner facing his interrogators should try to make himself as strong as possible, but he should not be surprised if he finds himself sometimes overtaken by weakness and despair. Man or woman should not be ashamed at dissolving into tears, or showing other symptoms of distress. Nature has ways of relieving tension. Tears lead to greater calmness, despair is followed by hope. The prisoner must cling to his belief in victory. The longer he holds out, the nearer he is to his goal. The very fact that the police are still trying to squeeze information out of him shows that they, with all the power in their hands, have not succeeded in getting what they wanted, and this in itself is a triumph for the prisoner.

Nor should the prisoner feel, if he breaks down temporarily, that all is now lost, that he has committed an unforgivable sin, that he is past redemption, that he will be abandoned by his comrades and regarded as an enemy. The enemy is the one who willingly collaborates with the police, who abandons the struggle and capitulates unconditionally. The prisoner who carries on fighting, even though he may have made mistakes and admissions under pressure, can still keep his pride and enjoy the confidence of his comrades. Many prisoners, after a temporary breakdown, have recovered to become stronger and more determined than they were before. The point to remember is - give as little information as possible. Even if you have been driven to the point where you feel you can bear no more and must make some sort of statement to avoid further torture or complete collapse, say as little as you can. Talk about yourself, but not about others. If you must name others, try to name people who can no longer be harmed, who have left the country, or who have already been sentenced for the "crime" you are alleging against them. Try not to involve anybody unnecessarily, not to give the names of any new or unknown people. Keep on fighting, even in temporary retreat. However much you may regret your weakness, you must never surrender.

Even if, under torture or constant interrogation, you have broken down to the extent of telling everything you know, you can still render a service to the movement by refusing to give evidence. Your statement cannot be used in court unless you yourself make it as a witness. Resist the temptation to feel that, having given everything away, there is no point in stopping and you may as well do all the police ask of you. You can still fight back and deny the police their ultimate triumph - using you to help convict one of your comrades. True, you can be sent to jail for a year for refusing to give evidence. But that is surely preferable to the disgrace and shame you will feel for helping send a comrade to a long term of imprisonment or even to the gallows. Don't be deluded by the promise of release - it may never materialise.

The point is, no matter how far you have broken down, how low you think you have fallen, never allow your sense of self-disgust to overcome

your duty to continue fighting back. In the silence and loneliness of your cell, in the inferno of the interrogation room or the torture chamber, in court, no matter how isolated and abandoned you may feel, remember you bear on your shoulders the cause of all progressive humanity. You may see and hear no one but your enemies; but your comrades are always thinking of you. In the eyes of the whole world you are a symbol of resistance to the hideous tyranny of apartheid. Your weaknesses, however regrettable, can be forgiven and forgotten; your conscious and deliberate collaboration, never.

To sum up: in detention you will be carrying on the fight on another battlefield. You will be alone, and your enemies will seem all powerful, but they are not. Your only chance of saving yourself is TO KEEP ON FIGHTING. If you are knocked down, get up again. Don't give in.

And above all, the golden rule is still: NO INFORMATION. Outside the jail, your comrades are carrying on the struggle. No matter how much damage you think the police may have caused by raids, arrests and convictions, the fight for liberation continues. Those comrades who are left free will be reorganising and regrouping. New forces will be entering the movement. By giving information you can only damage the work of reconstruction.

NO INFORMATION! NO INFORMATION! KEEP FIGHTING! KEEP FIGHTING!

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It has been established that Dr. Abrahams and three friends arrived in Bechuanaland (which borders on South-West Africa); they reported to a police post at Manono, where South African police demanded that the men be returned to South-West Africa. This request was refused.

They then went further into Bechuanaland to Ghanzi, where they were issued with temporary residential permits and accepted accommodation in the Government rest house. From there they left by lorry for Lobatsi. According to their story, their lorry was waylaid, the men were kidnapped at gunpoint by White men, some of whom later changed into the uniform of the South African police, and they were taken to Gobabis in South West Africa and locked in cells.

The South African Minister ~~for~~^{of} Justice, Mr. Vorster, in a widely-publicised ~~stark~~ statement, describes this story as 'sheer nonsense.' But now he must support this allegation in court, as an urgent application was made to the Cape Supreme Court (Dr. Abrahams was moved to Cape Town) for his release. The presiding judge has ordered that he should be produced in court on September 5th, and calls on the Minister of Justice to show why he should not be released and returned to Bechuanaland, and why they should not be interdicted from obstructing his return.

The case has moved up to inter-government level with a Note delivered to the South African Government from the British Embassy, and with questions asked in the British parliament.

It is not suggested that the British Government were in any way a party to the kidnapping; as in the Ganyile case, it can only prove extremely embarrassing to the British authorities and cause tension. However, in the case of other South African refugees the action of the British authorities is arousing widespread resentment.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hodgson are political refugees who went to live in Lobatsi in Bechuanaland last year. They had been placed under house arrest in Johannesburg for five years, during which period Mr. Hodgson was not permitted to leave his flat, and Mrs. Hodgson was allowed out only during the day. As the conditions were intolerable to them, they left the country.

They were permitted to remain in Lobatsi, but they were asked to give an undertaking that they would not engage in any political activities. This they refused, saying that they had been forced to leave South Africa because of their unrelenting opposition to apartheid, and they intended to continue to fight it in any possible way, wherever they lived.

They were then informed that their temporary residence permit would not be renewed. They informed the authorities that they were not in a position to hire a plane to leave Bechuanaland, and that they did not intend to leave. The British authorities then proposed to send them into exile at Ghanzi, a little village in the Kalahari desert, and to confine them to a radius of one mile around Ghanzi. At the present time they have lodged an appeal against this order, and their impending exile has been delayed. The Hodgson case has aroused severe comment, the British weekly paper, the Economist, saying that they were persecuted by the South African government for political activities 'of a kind with which their fellow Britons are in sympathy almost to a man.' The Bechuanaland authorities, states the Economist, allege they have continued those activities, which are not aimed against the British authorities, only against South Africa. 'The impression is created that in this bit of British territory only a South African loyal to the policies of Dr. Verwoerd can enjoy full freedom to travel and voice his opinions. It is an impression that ought to be removed.'

In addition the administration in Bechuanaland has drafted new legislation, locally called the Conspiracy Bill, which would enable the Attorney-General to order the arrest of anyone opposing the South African government. The draft Bill proposes a penalty of imprisonment and a fine. What has surprised and disturbed British members of parliament is that the text of the Bill specifies the fine not in pounds sterling, but in rands - the South African currency. It would seem from this that the new currency system of South Africa has been adopted in Bechuanaland, a territory where a high fraction of the White public servants are in fact South African citizens. The Bill, prohibiting political refugees from taking part in activities which could "damage relations with a neighbouring state" is similar to legislation that has already been passed in Basutoland and Swaziland.

Dennis Brutus, a South African teacher and well-known sportsman, who fled to Swaziland a short while ago, has been refused a temporary residence permit.

In their handling of these cases of refugees from apartheid terror, the British government must soon be forced into a position where their attitude is more clearly defined. They cannot continue to condemn the evils of race discrimination in South Africa, while persecuting those who oppose the South African government and failing to provide the protection that should be afforded by British territory.

IBT - International Broadcasting Trust - is a consortium of 64 organisations (Oxfam, trade unions, church bodies, UNICEF, the Runnymede Trust, many concerned with aid, education and welfare) formed to give voluntary bodies opportunities to take an active part in TV production. Their 10-part series Common Interest, starting on Channel 4 ~~ix~~ this month, looks at some of the problems and needs of third world countries. Toni Strasburg went to Kenya and Mozambique to make the first two films in this series.

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'We are very grateful to the English people who have come all this way by air, by sea and by road, to be bitten by insects just like us.'

We were in the village of Coca Missava in Mozambique's fertile Limpopo valley. The big plantations that ~~were~~ the Portuguese abandoned were taken over by the state. But most of the people in the countryside are organised in communal villages, usually of several thousand people; Coca Missava has 8,000. Some fields are worked collectively, and all the peasants have their own individual plots. Every village has a consumer cooperative, a school, health services, and some small industry related to their production. These services could not be brought to the majority of Mozambiquans - the peasants - without the centres provided by the communal village structure.

There were few ~~young~~ men in the village. Many of them are still away working on the South African mines; others have been called up for militia training because of the frequent South African attacks in this area.

Because of this, the Ministry of Information - who generously loaned us their only Land Rover - would only agree to let us stay in the village if we left each evening at sunset and drove to the nearest town.

We wanted to keep the films simple, to get people to speak for themselves, to tell us what it was like before independence, what has changed, and what their expectations are for the future. In a short film we could present problems, but not deal with the wider implications. We let the people speak without a presenter. In fact what they perceive as their needs is not necessarily what the West sees as important or imperative.

~~In the village, we became part of their life. The villagers took~~

Because we were aware of the acute food shortages, we had brought food for the film ^{crew} team. But the villagers were indignant: You are our guests; and insisted on feeding us, bringing putu, cassava, beans and bananas. We were totally accepted, we became part of village life, and the villagers organised our film.

The interpreter did not always understand our questions. If we wanted him to ask Is life better now? he would say, Why do you ask? Isn't it obvious? Can't you see? Yet what our Western eyes saw was their extreme poverty.

One day the women said they would dance for us. What they had organised was actually a dance-drama of their own history. They showed men being taken away as forced labour in colonial times, and women leaving their homes to seek work or some means to survive. When the FRELIMO troops arrived the audience of 8,000 villagers fell totally silent, re-living the greatest drama of their lives.

The village is still run by the old men - the village elders - although FRELIMO cadres in the district have overall responsibility. And now the women, organised in the OMM, take part as well; they are always there when discussions are held.

Marie Elene: For us women it was not just an emancipation from colonialisation, but also from being taken for granted by our men. Now we can attend meetings and talk amongst men. It really shows we are free.

There was tremendous political awareness among the peasants. They spoke of their biggest enemy - South Africa. They hate us so much that they make us uncomfortable in our own country. They hate us because of the stand we have taken in advocating socialism.

The women filed silently into our hut on the day we were packing our equipment to leave. They embraced us and sang for us. We wept as we left Coca Missava.

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over the making of the film

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