

PLEASE EXCUSE ^{T-1} BAD
TYPING! Too
TIRE.

THE ARRESTS

The Congregational Mission African "Reserve" of Groutville, Natal, South Africa, had been dark and peaceful for many hours, on the night of December 4th. No lights showed; the inhabitants slept peacefully. About 4 A.M. on the 5th, a car turned into the lane leading to ex-Chief Luthuli's home, and stopped in the sand at his door, just inside the ~~hedge~~ hedge. Four plain-clothes men left the car, the bulge of their weapons showing beneath their coats. A thunderous knocking disturbed the early morning peace; the Chief's ear, attuned to this kind of noise, heard the knocks, and he called out sleepily: "Who's there?"

"Open up! The police!" came the loud reply.

"This is it!" he thought, wide-awake now, as he wrapped his dressing gown around him and went ~~at~~ open the door.

91 "Come in, gentlemen," he invited in his dignified way. Many such alarms had made a House Search "old stuff" to the Chief, who is a veteran of such raids. But this time it was different. The officer in charge, before starting the usual search, approached the Chief and handed him a paper.

"Warrant for your arrest: Albert J. Luthuli, President - General, African National Congress--- on the charge of High Treason. You will come with us after the search."

The Chief and his wife, the helpmate of 30 years, looked at each other. Treason! The threatened blow had fallen indeed. This had been foretold by Minister of Justice Swart in Parliament last May, when, twitted by the United Party Opposition as to what tangible results could be shown for the House Searches of September 1955, he had stated that before the end of 1956 approximately 200 persons would be arrested for Treason, Sedition or Conspiracy. -- Here it was, then!

The search was a thorough one, including even the opening of Christmas gifts belonging to a friend, which had been accidentally left in the Luthuli house. A box of the friend's personal papers was carefully examined: financial statements, insurance papers, family photographs, personal letters. All this was done without any search warrant for the person to whom the papers belonged. Innumerable questions were asked of both husband and wife in regard to this friend:

"Who is this European? Where did you meet her? Why did she leave her things here?"

When Mrs. Luthuli answered that she was a "friend," the ire

one of the detectives boiled over.

"What do you mean-- a friend? Don't you know that Europeans never can be 'friends' of Natives? "

The detectives gave the Christmas presents back, but took-- without giving any specific receipt for them-- the box full of the European friend's personal papers and letters. Then they pressed Albert Luthuli to hurry and get ready to come with them. When his wife tried to give him at least a toothbrush and a wash-cloth, one of the men, fending them off, exclaimed:

"Man! You don't need to wash all the time! What are you-- a woman? "

In the end, the Chief was rushed away without a suitcase, without a change of underwear or shaving gear: not even wearing a necktie. No mention was made of the fact that he would be whisked away to Johannesburg (500 miles away) by military airplane that same morning, without any chance to obtain personal necessities for the journey.

Another of the "treason suspects", as they are called, M.B. Yenghwa, Secretary of the Natal A.N.C., was also awakened at dawn by the thunderous knock of the Secret Police -- this time on the door of his thatched hut. He is one of those who had been "banned" because of his political activities (perfectly legal!), and in addition was banished from his home in Durban, where he was studying law, to the remote country district of Mapumulo, some 80 miles away: a place where he had no home, no job, no chance to continue his law studies except by mail (which he did) and no mother for his four small children. His wife deserted him when the ban was announced. He was also awakened about 5 A.M. on the 5th of December -- which ironically happened to be his 33rd birthday-- and handed an arrest warrant also bearing the words: "High Treason". 'His' detectives were more courteous than those who arrested the Chief: he was allowed to pack a suitcase: the officer even queried if he had remembered his shaving things. This courtesy did not, however, prevent the seizure-- for what reason it is hard to see-- of his hard-earned adding machine, an invaluable aid in the accounting work with which he has earned his living since his exile.

Mr. Yenghwa, after kissing his four sleeping children good-bye (two boys and two girls, all under nine years old) was, like the Chief, taken by car to Durban, arraigned very briefly there by a sleepy Magistrate in a specially convened court, and remanded to Johannesburg.

Mr. P.H. Simelane, Treasurer of the Natal A.N.C., has a more dramatic story to tell. Two armed men met him as he opened the door.

"Are you Simelane? " ---- " Yes, I am. " ---- "Here is a Warrant for your arrest." ---- "What for? " ---- "High Treason."

Before he had a chance to recover from his surprise, one of the detectives clapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

"Come along!" he ordered roughly.

"What! You mean to take me in my pyjamas? "

The other officer intervened. "House search first," he ordered.

The hand-cuffed Simelane sat on his bed and watched the two men ransack all his belongings: his desk, his cupboard, his suitcase. The less polite of the two railed at him as they searched:

"Well, we've got you at last! Stupid of you to throw yourself away on foolishness like this Congress business. -- Now we'll see if you will go to the Afro-Asian Conference! We know that you were going to go - you were, weren't you? "

"Let me see the Warrant of Arrest", asked the prisoner. It was laid across his handcuffed wrists. The date on it was : 1953 -- 1956. High Treason. He would be tried, then, for alleged acts committed during those years.

"It does not matter," he answered the goading officer calmly. "Even if I die, I will die happy, for it is for my country! "

"Is that so? " the detective looked furious enough to strike him. The other one intervened again.

"You know, Simelane, it would be nice if you would make us a cup of coffee. We've been up for a long time already, this morning -- " The hand-cuffed man only looked at them, both. After

~~moment~~ -- "Get dressed, Simelane! Hurry, now! "

He was not given time to pack a suitcase: not even time to find a clean shirt. After he was dressed he was hand-cuffed again. When he discovered that it was raining outside and wished to put on his overcoat, the officers refused to unlock the cuffs so he could do so. When he arrived at the Magistrates Court, however, an officer who saw him with the hand-cuffs ran quickly to him and unlocked them. He seemed embarrassed -- very likely because none of the other prisoners had been so treated, and he did not wish reporters and the public to see.

At the Magistrates Court all the prisoners who had been "rounded up" in the dawn from various sections of Natal were quickly remanded to the Johannesburg Court, transported to the airport with the utmost dispatch and secrecy, and flown in two military planes to Johannesburg. Among the "treason suspects" from Natal were Dr. G.M. Naicker, President of the South African Indian Congress, G. Hurbans, Joint Secretary of the South African Indian Congress, Mr. Stephen Dhlamini, Joint Secretary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, and other officials and members of the A.N.C., the Natal Indian Congress, the A.N.C. Women's League and the South African

Congress of Democrats. Dr. Wilson Zamindlela Conco, Deputy President-General of the A.N.C., and also a resident of Natal, was not rounded up in this first "Batch" of suspects, but surrendered himself about a week later, joining his co-workers in the Johannesburg Fort -- the dark, damp old prison, built into the side of a hill originally as a fort, is called.

LIFE IN "THE FORT"

Starting with the arrival of the first "treason suspects" on the 5th of December, the old Johannesburg Fort hummed with activity. Officers and members of 45 different organizations (40 were listed in official reports, but of those three are "fictional") gathered from all parts of the Union, kept arriving in batches over a period of a week or more. All arrivals were "processed" in the same humiliating prison fashion:

Officer at the first desk: "Name"? -- "Pass on^{to} the next office."

Next office: "Leave your money valuables! --- Pass on!"

Next cubicle: "Everybody strip!" their clothes were searched. "Put your clothes on! -- Lively, now!"

The accused were then taken to the cells, two large ones, which would be their "home" for the next fifteen days.

Three blankets were issued to each prisoner, and one thin woven mat on which to sleep on the cold concrete floor, using his coat for a pillow if he desired one. Each prisoner was given a galvanized iron basin for his food ("the kind you feed dogs in," one of the medical men said to me) and a large rough wooden spoon to eat with. A lawyer showed me one of these rough-hewn spoons: "I am keeping it for a souvenir," he said. --

There was one water-closet, not enclosed, in each of the cells which came to house fifty men, and one water tap. We heard that the water-closet had been installed as a special "concession" to the "treason boys", as the Warders called the accused. In most non-European sections of prisons in South Africa there is "bucket sanitation" in the cells.

However, all to whom I spoke stated that in general the treatment accorded them was much better than that usually given prisoners awaiting trial. There were no instances of physical brutality; the mats, dishes and eating utensils, and many of the blankets were new, and unusual privileges were granted, such as regular sending in of food from outside friends-- of which more later. They were even given materials with which to fumigate their cells, when they could no longer endure the torture of lice and fleas with which the cells -- at least the non-European ones-- were infested.

In the Fort, as elsewhere in South Africa, strict racial "Apartheid" was kept: that is, the "white race" was kept 'pure' and by itself. There were, finally, 100 Africans, 23 Europeans, 20 Indians and 8 Coloreds. For Europeans -- lawyers, professors, business men, professional women, mothers of families, Trades Union leaders, a Member of Parliament and one Methodist Clergyman, Rev. Douglas C. Thompson -- there were more civilized living conditions: only 3 to 6 in a cell, beds to sleep in, chairs to sit on, knives and forks to eat with, and better food. The African, Indian and Colored men were lumped together in two large cells, having no furniture but their sleeping mats, and so crowded that when they lay down to rest their bodies touched. The sitting on the cold cement was a great trial, especially to some of the older leaders, who had long ago lost the native African facility for "squatting" for long periods on their haunches--- but even for the oldest and most distinguished of their number no chairs were provided.

Among the well-known leaders of the "Liberation Movement" included in this "select gathering" in the Fort were: Professor Z.K. Matthews, for over a year Acting Principal of Fort Hare University College; his son Joe, A.N.C. Youth League leader; Oliver Tambo, lawyer and Secretary-General of the A.N.C.; his law-partner Nelson Mandela; Dr. A.E. Letele, Treasurer-General of the A.N.C.; W.M. Sisulu, former Secretary General of A.N.C.; L.B. Lee-Warden, Member of Parliament, and two African ministers of the Anglican church, as well as the Methodist clergyman already referred to. As Chief Luthuli remarked:

"The cream of South Africa is here."

The daily schedule in the Fort ran like this: 6.15 rising time; line up for counting (a procedure that went on all day); wash and dress; 7.30 breakfast, in the yard -- soft-cooked porridge only. After breakfast the cells and yard were cleaned by those appointed for the day. About 10 A.M. -- line up for inspection by the Commandant. One of the accused mimicked his pompous stride to perfection. Sometimes he would inspect the cells and lavatory-- very hastily, and with a disgusted expression on his chubby face. After inspection the prisoners were free to exercise in the yard as well as 93 men could in the small space. At 11.45 came dinner, which was also eaten outdoors: boiled "mealies" ("corn" to Americans, cut off the cob) with hard cow peas. Twice a week a small piece of meat. (The European prisoners had stew with some meat every day.) At

Noon, after dinner, the men were locked in their cells until 2 P.M., while the jailers ate and lounged. Out again from 2 to 4, when supper arrived -- more porridge. And at 4 the "non-Europeans" were locked in their cells for the night; "lights out" at 8. So the fifteen days in the Fort went.

But this bare time schedule does not tell the full tale. That the food situation would have been most depressing, if the prisoners had been forced to eat only the prison diet, can be seen by the menu. But twice a day devoted bands of Indian and some European women brought appetizing food to supplement the prison diet: sandwiches and steaming coffee and fresh fruit in the morning, and curry with meat and rice at night. African women from nearby urban "locations" took home all the washing for the 152 prisoners.

The "politicals", as the more ordinary prisoners called them, organized their time in the Fort to very good advantage. Nothing like their organization and activities had ever been seen by the astonished jailers. On the second day a "High Command" was formed to take over general direction of the "treason suspects"; at first it consisted of the Presidents of the two Congresses-- Chief Luthuli and Dr. Naicker--; later when Professor Z.K. Matthews arrived, he as a "senior statesman" was added to this Managing Committee. The High Command appointed Chairmen to take charge of each of the cells, which were dubbed "The Lower House" (Robert Resha of Johannesburg, Chairman,) and the "Upper House" (M.B. Yenghwa Chairman). These House Committees supervised the cleaning and keeping of order in the cells, appointing prisoners in rotation to do the necessary but unsavory jobs. It was also the responsibility of these Chairmen to supervise the care and distribution of food. No individual food packages brought to prisoners might be hoarded; after the recipient had eaten his fill, the remainder was "nationalized", as the men jokingly dubbed it: distributed among the group.

Other Committees organized among the prisoners were: the Entertainment Committee, which put on lectures by experts which often would have done credit to a University; the Legal Committee, made up of imprisoned lawyers, who cooperated with their legal counsel; the Press Committee, which read the newspapers to the assembled cell groups; and the Physical Culture Committee, which organized daily Setting Up exercises in the cells, just before bed-time.

The activities of the Entertainment Committee interested me especially. Lectures were held in the noon to 2 P.M. period when the prisoners were shut in their cells, and included one of professional calibre by Rev. Calata on "African Music"; (he is himself an eminent musician and composer) one on "African Traditional Medicine" by Arthur Letele, M.D.; one on the "History of Indians in South Africa" by Mr. Debi Singh, and two by Professor Z.K. Matthews : "The History of the American Negro", and "The History of the African National Congress" -- on which subject he has been engaged in writing

a book. These lectures were attended by all the prisoners, since permission had been obtained for a "joint session" of the two Houses to take place in the Lower House (cell!) at the noon hour.

For one of these joint sessions the Lower House organized a debate in the framework of an imaginary "Parliament". With so many lawyers among the accused, this was inevitable! G. Hurbans of the Natal Indian Congress was Prime Minister, Dr. Letele was Leader of the Opposition, and Rev. Calata was Speaker. All the proper Cabinet Ministers and a group of M.P.s were appointed and in their places, and a "Spectators Gallery" included the rest of the prisoners. The subject of the debate was the question of the prohibition of manufacture, sale and consumption of alcoholic liquors, which proposition the Government supported. The Government lost its motion -- most irregularly the Gallery was allowed to join in the voting! -- upon which the Minister of Justice, Joseph Matthews, promptly ordered the arrest of the whole Opposition. This move provoked much laughter and jibes of : " A typically South African procedure! "

INFLUENCE OF THE "POLITICALS"

It was believed by many that the very presence of the "politicals" in the Fort, and the grudging respect which they received from their jailers, helped somewhat to improve conditions for the ordinary prisoners as well. Chief Luthuli told of their group having seen other prisoners being beaten and knocked about by the jailers at lock-up time. This brutal sight aroused natural resentment in the "treason group", and when their turn came to be locked up, for the first time the men were non-cooperative and in an unpleasant mood. The Warder noticed the temper of the men, and called out Chief Luthuli, who handled all complaints and acted as spokesman to the Warders, to ask the reason for the bad feeling displayed. The Chief replied that his men had witnessed the undeserved beating given the other prisoners, and were very angry about it. He and his group objected very strongly, he said, to such brutality against any human beings; the Warder could not expect their cooperation if such action persisted. -- The Chief never witnessed any such incident during the rest of his days in the Fort.

RE-DEDICATION CEREMONY

After the lecture by Professor Matthews on the History of the A.N.C., the consensus of opinion in both "Houses" called for a ceremony of formal re-dedication to the principles of the A.N.C. A solemn and very impressive ceremony was accordingly held, presided over by President-General Luthuli. A large circle was formed, joining hands, and inside of that a smaller circle, made up half of young men and half of veterans in the Cause, symbolizing the union of the old and the new in the A.N.C. Inside the inner circle stood Chief Luthuli and A.N.C. National Chaplain, Rev. Gawe.

The Chief made a speech, calling on all present to re-dedicate themselves to the struggle for freedom.

"If there are any present," he said, "who are sorry to be here in the Fort, and regret that their membership in Congress has brought them to this pass, let them drop out of the circle and stand back. Only those of us who are determined to continue the fight may sing "Mayibuye" -- (the freedom song -- "May Africa arise".)

No one left the circle or stood back, and participants say that even the Indians who normally do not sing Western music well, opened their mouths wide and made a noise, to show that they were singing!

After the Mayibuye song, the Chaplain prayed and Chief shook hands all around the inner circle. The simple but heart-felt ceremony ended with general singing of the beautiful African National Anthem: "Nkosi sikelela Afrika" -- "God bless Africa" -- and those who participated say that it was sung, not with their voices alone, but with their hearts.

SILENCE IN THE COURT!

On December 21st the Preliminary Examination of the "treason suspects" recessed until January 9th. That day, in the Drill Hall, the spectators in court witnessed one of the most unusual happenings in South African court history: prisoners made speeches and gave instructions to each other in open court!

After the judge (or "magistrate" as he is called in South Africa) had left the bench, the 152 prisoners continued to sit in their huge dock, a cut-down wire cage. First Rev. Douglas Thompson, (white) Methodist District Superintendent, and himself one of the accused, made a little speech, giving Christmas greetings to all his fellow prisoners. Chief Luthuli then arose to reciprocate the greetings, and went on to express the thanks of the accused to the African, Indian and European people of Johannesburg who had so graciously and tirelessly cared for the needs of the prisoners during their stay in the Fort. -- The Chief is a master at such "little speeches"; his dignity and finesse can hardly be matched by anyone I have ever heard. The listening court attendants, the lawyers on both sides, the curious European crowd, even the armed police -- all still present in court -- heard this cultured "black man" with astonishment, I am sure.

He then proceeded to instruct the defendants as to what they were to do, when the court recessed: where to go, to find transportation home -- he enjoined them not to forget their conditions of bail; he reminded them to be prompt in returning for the resumption of the Preliminary Examination on January 9th.

This Zulu ex-Chief, with his dignified bearing and quiet air of authority, wins the respect of all kinds of people, wherever he goes: and he proved this fact again, that day in the Johannesburg courtroom, when even the hardened policemen did not hinder him from speaking publicly to his fellow-prisoners -- an unprecedented privilege.

S.H.N.

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