

A LOST COMMUNITY

What apartheid means to the Indians of the Transvaal.

An Indian business man, the father of seven children, has had his house cut in half by apartheid laws. He and his children may live in one half of the house, but they may not set foot in the other half without breaking the law.

Mr. A.K.M. Vawda had the wall between two small cottages removed, and converted them into one house for his large family. But because Whites once lived in one of the cottages, he is now prohibited from occupying that part of his house.

This is just a small example of the devastating effect of the Group Areas Act, the law that uproots hundreds of thousands of people and that spells ruination for the Indians of the Transvaal.

The Indian community constitutes the smallest racial group in South Africa, about 500,000, of whom one half live in Durban. 90.5 per cent were born in South Africa. For this community, and particularly for the 50,000 Indians who live in the Transvaal, the Group Areas Act has spelt untold hardship and ruination. This Act permits the proclamation of specified areas for certain racial groups, and it is the machinery for uprooting tens of thousands of people and transplanting them elsewhere in order to separate the races.

For Indians of the Transvaal it means not simply residential segregation, but complete economic ruin.

The first Indians to settle in Johannesburg arrived in 1886, the year of the discovery of the rich Witwatersrand gold fields. By law and by tradition they have been barred from most avenues of employment. Even where no legal barrier exists, there are certainly few facilities for Indians in most jobs. For example, out of a total of 216,624 employees in the South African Railways only 675 are Indians (probably all in the capacity of waiters on trains); and of 18,637 people employed by the Posts and Telegraphs, only 69 are Indian.

Because of such conditions Indians who came to the Transvaal - like Jews in Europe in the past - almost all entered into the field of trading. It was scarcely a matter of choice. They spread out in the sparsely-populated country areas of the Transvaal and opened trading stores among scattered farming communities. In dozens of country towns they were the first, and for a long time the only, traders.

They built themselves homes, mosques and schools, and although they always lived as separate communities, they maintained a good relationship with the Whites and Africans alike who patronised their shops.

The Group Areas Act at the same time drives these people from their homes and deprives them of their livelihood. Throughout the Transvaal the story is the same; after years of pioneering, of hard work to establish themselves, of building up a business - now complete ruin. The local Councils in the various small towns proclaim the town as White; the Indians have a year, sometimes two, to dispose of homes, shops, stock, fittings, everything. After the time has expired, they must move to the area set aside for them - in the country towns it is usually a piece of bare veld about 2 miles from the town itself - where they have simply no means whatsoever of earning a living. Meanwhile White businessmen - too often the very same people who were responsible for the displacement of the Indians - buy up their shops and homes at a fraction of their true worth, and establish their businesses - much in the same way as Hitler's followers ousted Jewish business men for their own private profit. Apartheid, like other forms of racialism has grasping motives under the emotional exterior.

Here are typical stories from various small Transvaal towns:

GERMISTON: Although the Indians were the very first to settle in this area, they are being thrown out of the city they helped to build. 2,500 of them are a lost people living on borrowed time; all have received removal orders.

NELSPRUIT: In this pretty town set among citrus farms, the oldest established businesses belong to Indians, a community of 400 who must now vacate houses, shops, thriving businesses to go and live on a piece of vacant land across the railway lines. Ruin faces them - and they were the pioneers of Nelspruit.

POTGIETERSRUS: The whole town has been proclaimed White. There are 20 Indian shops worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. ~~times~~ All the Indians must now go and live a mile away from the town.

NYLSTROOM: 217 Indians must move from their homes, selling their properties which are the most valuable and best situated in town, and go and live in dusty bushveld 2 miles from the town.

BETHAL: Indians here, numbering 400, have lived in Bethal since 1885. Now they must relinquish businesses worth more than half a million pounds to go and live on a patch of bare veld 2 miles from town.

VENTERSDORP: Abdul Amodjee, one of the traders forced to move, has been banished from the house in which he was born and where his family have

lived since 1888. The Ventersdorp Town Council, whose Mayor would like to see all Indians deported, and who undoubtedly has property interests in the town himself, says that he must trade in an isolated spot outside the town.

And this is repeated in dozens of other country towns.

In Johannesburg, 22,167 Indians are to be moved to an area set aside for them, Lenasia, which is 22 miles outside Johannesburg. 1,200 Indian traders will be moved, and must relinquish more than £20 million of stock, fittings, goodwill and fixed property. Within Johannesburg are areas like Pageview - one of the main Indian trading areas for more than 50 years; in Pageview live 5,000 Indians and 13 Whites - but it has been proclaimed a White area and the Indians, some of whom have lived there since 1902 and have built mosques, schools, churches and cinemas, face economic disaster. Or Martindale, where 300 Indians have lived for more than 40 years, that has been earmarked for White housing.

The 38,000 Indians who live in and around Johannesburg are to be moved, every single one, to 3 separate areas set aside for them. These three areas must somehow, within the next 5 years, become self-supporting communities. Two of these have not yet been established, but they will be similar to Lenasia, where there are no industries nor prospects for employment, so that the Indian residents must travel 22 miles to Johannesburg to seek work. Deprived of their businesses, paying high rents and excessive fares to town, one section of Lenasia has been nicknamed 'Dry Bones Valley' Recently residents who had fallen behind with their rents were evicted from their homes in Drybones. On a dusty Lenasia pavement outside her house, an elderly Indian woman wept among the pots and pans and bits of furniture, with an ejection notice on the door of her home. Another family had their furniture put out in the rain. One woman returned from work in Johannesburg to find her four young children, one a baby only a year old, sitting in the dust among the furniture that had been thrown out of her home onto the street. Most families in Drybones are behind with their rent.

In Laudium, the Indian Group Area near Pretoria, 330 families are in arrears with rent running into thousands of pounds.

In some places, when served with removal notices, the Indians refuse to move. Then they face jail sentences and fines. In the little country town of Carolina this month every Indian shop was closed as a gesture of sympathy and at sunset the Indian community flocked to the tiny mosque to pray for the town's oldest Indian inhabitant, 85-year-old Mohamed Ismail Dadabhai,

who was convicted together with a Moslem priest, a school principal and a wealthy businessman for failing to leave their homes - proclaimed for White residents only. Dadabhay has lived in Carolin since 1911, and in his present home for 25 years. He and his sickly wife do not want to leave their home, which adjoins the mosque, where they go five times a day. All the convicted men were fined and ordered to relinquish their homes.

When Dr. Verwoerd met a deputation of Indians ~~inXXXXXX~~ earlier this year he told them that it had to be accepted that the Indians, just as all the other racial groups, were different. This was not derogatory, he stated, because it did not mean that any group was lower than another.

Basically the object of group areas, he explained, was to provide exactly what the Indians wanted. It was only when people lived together as a group that they could serve their own community. He described the Government's policy as an honest attempt at solving the problem and creating peace, prosperity and good relations.

This is the description he gives to a horrifyingly cruel and callous act that imposes the ruthless compulsory liquidation of flourishing Indian businesses and uprooting of peoples, an act that is nothing but armed robbery. Group areas has never yet been applied to the disadvantage of the Whites, nor has it caused the uprooting of any White communities. It is an act that leading professional and church people have described as "genocide . . . lunatic and immoral . . . cruel, inhuman and pagan . . . and the very negation of ideals of justice, inviting us to corrupt ourselves".

The systematic destruction of the Indian community of South Africa is just one more facet of the heart-breaking and immoral application of apartheid.

ends

£100,000 is to be spent in 1963-1964 on security fencing and floodlighting for harbours and railway depots in South Africa, as an anti-sabotage measure. This move to guard vital installations and rail depots from saboteurs is a measure of the future that the country now faces, and an assessment of the sabotage efforts of the past year, recognised now to be more frequent and increasingly successful.

Taken together with expenditure on defence, which has reached ~~the~~ enormous (for South Africa) proportions, this reveals the country as facing an ever more turbulent future - quite different from the picture of content^{nt} and xprosperity that the government is fond of presenting to the world.

For the first time in about 30 years a South African government is faced with a budget deficit; had it not been for expenditure of almost R130 million (£65 million) on defence, there would have been the usual large surplus.

Force in fact increasingly dominates the scene, and visiting jouranalists and businessmen who tour the country at the expense of the South African Foundation (a big-business "whitewash" organisation for the government) and write glowingly of the housing and other services provided for the African population, blandly close their eyes to this sinister evidence of a situation that is rapidly slipping out of control.

PISTOL CLUBS AND DEATH SENTENCES.

Here are some of the pointers that reveal the true state of affairs:

- * The budget for guns, tanks and soldiers has risen steadily since 1948, and has tripled in the last two years alone.
- * The permanent army (White) has been vastly expanded. By 1966 there will be 60,000 trained men in arms - all White.
- * The period of taining for army reservists (boys who have left school) has been extended, and they are openly being instructed in warfare to combat uprisings and to deal with guerillas.

* Civilians are being organised on military lines as an additional auxiliary force, and are to be empowered to act as policemen in times of emergency.

* Pistol clubs for White women are spreading. The women receive shooting instruction under local police officers, and so far has this gone that in Port Elizabeth schoolgirls are now being taught how to use pistols with the permission of the education and military authorities (who are providing the instruction.)

* The first death-sentence has been passed for an act of sabotage, and since January, 26 Africans have been sentenced to a total of 404 years' imprisonment for sabotage. Scores more are in prison awaiting trial and sentence especially in the Cape.

BANS AND PROHIBITIONS

Repressive bans and restrictions are reaching maniacal proportions. The government has reached the position of all such bureaucracies, a belief that for every problem the solution is another decree, another government notice, another banning order. There are now more than 500 people whose names appear on various lists, and who therefore become automatically subject to one or other of the various bans. The 'banned' list is representative of all race and language groups in South Africa and of widely divergent politics; it includes all the most militant and experienced political leaders of the campaigns and battles of the last 20 years. It includes almost every profession, class and income. All the people on the list are subject to some of the bans, and some of the people to all the bans. They include:

. A ban from social and other gatherings. A gathering is defined as two or more people who come together for a common purpose. The victims of this ban may never attend any meetings, lectures, discussions, school functions, nor even weddings or funerals without special permission of the security police.

. Confinement to an area - sometimes to the town in which the person is living, sometimes to a much smaller area, such as a very restricted portion of the town.

. A ban from organisations that discuss government policy, whether opposed to it

or in favour of it. This means, virtually, a prohibition from belonging to any organisation at all other than, perhaps, a sewing circle or Church society. It is also likely to affect professional people whose continuance in practice may depend on their membership of their professional society. (This ban applies to all listed people.)

- . A ban on communicating with other banned people.

- . A ban on entering factories, compounds or African townships. This is aimed particularly at trade union organisers, but also affects the personal jobs of other people so banned.

- . A ban on the publication of statements or writings of banned people. This has silenced not only political leaders within South Africa, whose words may be smuggled out only through the underground press, but also journalists, writers and poets.

- . A prohibition - applying to all listed people - to prevent them having anything to do whatsoever with the preparation, writing, publication or distribution of any type of newspaper, magazine, bulletin or other publication.

- . House arrest, for either 12 or 24 hours a day, plus reporting daily to the police and a prohibition on receiving any visitors whatsoever.

- . Bans on publications. The continued efforts to suppress the free press have resulted in the disappearance of weekly newspapers, the banning of the monthly magazine Fighting Talk, and new legislation designed to cripple any publications or public entertainment that opposes the government.

Accompanied by police raids, heavy sentences for political offences and systematic intimidation of anyone who opposes the government, these bans are having the effect of silencing government opponents and driving popular opposition deeper underground. Recent bans and attacks have now been extended from Congress members to the Liberal Party, and an increasing number of Liberals have been threatened by the government, or banned; four were recently arrested and held for a week in the Transkei before being released (they had gone there to investigate complaints o

of police assaults). "The Liberal Party should be wiped off the face of the earth," stated a Nationalist member of parliament.

Police terror is being extended among Africans to include brutal beatings and torture of Africans held on suspicion of sabotage (and 'sabotage', under the most savage anti-sabotage law includes even acts like painting anti-government slogans) or similar activities. Among some of the cases that have found their way into the press was the savage beating of a well-known African leader arrested for the murder of a police officer (and later acquitted.) During the case the judge referred to "a holocaust of beatings." Another victim was acquitted in a sabotage trial, but is still undergoing treatment by mental specialists as a result of his experiences in the hands of the police. A recent incident concerned the arrest of six men - later all released - when visiting a sick friend; they were all taken to jail and beaten while the police tried to force from them information about anti-government activities. Even women and children have not been immune from these assaults in the hands of the so-called upholders of law and order.

The cases are not isolated incidents. The complaints and reports are so insistent that the authorities must be aware of what is happening. And even where complaints have been made or charges laid and affidavits sworn, not a single policeman against whom these allegations have been made has been brought to trial. It seems highly probable that beatings and torture by the police are part of a deliberate policy for the purpose of combating sabotage and illegal political activity.

So South Africa continues on a road that can only lead to increasing violence and greater suppression. South Africans use a phrase to describe the gathering together of a solid White opposition to African claims (made 'solid' by bannings, house arrests and other measures against those Whites who dare oppose the government's apartheid policy); the expression is "coming in to the laager." "The laager" was a huge circle formed of the wagons of those Whites who first trekked into the interior. Into the centre of the laager were grouped the women, the children and

domestic animals, while the men defended them with force of arms against the "savage hordes" - that is, the Black tribesmen whose lands they had invaded, and who resisted their trek.

The Black men battering at the walls of the laager today are demanding rights that can no longer be denied. Guns and force of arms cannot preserve this privileged White position for very much longer. But once again, as in the past, and to a greater degree than ever before, bloodshed and suffering will be the inevitable result of their attempt to maintain a rule that has been condemned throughout the world.

ends

336

HOUSE ARREST - SENTENCE WITHOUT TRIAL

House arrest. A new type of persecution devised by the South African government to punish without trial those who actively oppose their policies, and to intimidate into crawling silence all who have ever dared to criticise apartheid.

Several people have now been placed under house arrest. They may not leave the houses or flats where they live for the next five years, except at times specified by the order. In some cases the order is for 24 hours a day- that is, they may never, at any time of day or night, step outside the place where they live; in other cases, the person concerned is permitted to leave home between the hours of 6.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. to go to work, but may never go out at week-ends, at night, or on Public Holidays.

In addition:

- * they may not invite anyone at all to their homes, not even parents or relatives; the only person who may come to see them is a doctor;
- * they may not attend any type of gathering; this actually means they may not meet with anyone for lunch, go to a theatre, lecture, etc;
- * they may not communicate in any way with any 'banned' person;
- * those allowed out during the day must report every single day to the central police station at Marshall Square.

An eminent former judge, the Hon. O.D. Schreiner, states that house arrest without trial is contrary to the idea of the rule of law. "Where the restriction is for 24 hours a day," he states, "the person is confined as if in a jail without being provided with food, services and protection."

In preparing the country to accept these terribly harsh restrictions on people not actually accused of any crime, the government launched on a propaganda drive, part of which was a series of 'objective and impartial' broadcasts 'to inform South Africans on important national matters.' The broadcasts were racialistic and lying. The South African Broadcasting Corporation, supposed to be an independent body, revealed itself as the mouthpiece of the extreme, dictatorial government. They smeared every progressive and liberal organisation, and accused such bodies as the Peace Council and Congress of Trade Unions of being 'front' organisations for communism, on the grounds that both these bodies have association with international organisations.

Apart from 'softening up' the public before imposing house arrests, the

332

broadcasts were intended to intimidate every opponent of apartheid. The Minister of Justice, Mr. Vorster, Stated "There are people in the country who believe in one man one vote." He characterised this as dangerous, and indicated they must be silenced at all costs.

This lies at the heart of the matter. While the campaign appeared to be directed against communists, this is not the government's real target, but the whole range of opinion opposed to them today. And to an extent they succeed as liberals and progressives hasten to declare their own opposition to communism - a defence that does not prevent them becoming victims of so-called 'anti-communist' legislation. And they become more and more reluctant to stand by their basic principles, gradually withdrawing from the political arena.

This gives the government the illusion that opposition no longer exists, and reinforces their defiance of world opinion.

But their moral isolation from the world was emphasised by the U.N. resolution requesting member States to impose diplomatic and economic sanctions against South Africa. The resolution (67 for, 16 against, with 23 abstentions) also deplored the failure of the South African government "to comply with the repeated requests and demands of the General Assembly and of the Security Council and its flouting of world public opinion by refusing to abandon its racial policies."

Following the U.N. vote, Dr. Verwoerd made a provocative speech attacking Israel for voting for the resolution. "Israel wants to be in the good books of the Black states of Africa," he sneered, "It thinks the whole of Africa will be Black soon, and for business reasons it wants to be on the right side." He taunted South African jewry and challenged Israel to come off the fence.

The motive behind this lies in the Nationalist desire to consolidate the Whites in the Republic. By cutting links with Britain and the Commonwealth, the Nationalists felt they had drawn closer to their side that section of English-speaking South Africans who had in the past had a divided loyalty.

Jews in South Africa are in a comparable position. Their emotional ties with Israel, to whom they have given much practical voluntary assistance, are strong. If he can force South African jews to take a stand against Israel

over the U.N. vote, Dr. Verwoerd feels he will have a stronger hold over yet another section of White voters.

The South African government also takes comfort from the fact that in the past boycotts of their goods and ships have not been seriously applied. The overwhelming vote to impose sanctions is expected to be ignored by most of the Republic's trading partners. Countries like Britain, the United States, France and the Netherlands, which all voted against the imposition of sanctions, have the closest and largest trade and diplomatic ties with South Africa.

The suppression of all public anti-government activity; the arrest and imprisonment of dozens of leading freedom-fighters (including the recent 5-year sentence on underground African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela); the house arrest of those against whom no charges can be framed; the banning of all public meetings and demonstrations; the hounding of individuals who express opposition to the government; and the outward appearance of defiance to the United Nations vote; - all this gives a picture of a reactionary government strongly entrenched in power.

There is the appearance of formidable strength; an ever-expanding army equipped (by Britain and the United States) with modern weapons; ^{and} a police force that operates with Saracen tanks, planes and machine-guns in close collaboration with the army. Yet signs of fatal weaknesses are not lacking. Sabotage is on the increase, despite the passage of a law imposing the death sentence. The targets are various government installations, among the latest being explosions that rocked the city of Durban and plunged it into darkness. There was a daring attack on the office of a Cabinet Minister in Pretoria, and an electric sub-station in Johannesburg was destroyed.

The organisation responsible calls itself Umkonto we Sizwe - The Spear of the Nation. It has recently announced that from now on "we will answer Vorster and his White ruling clique with the only language they understand - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and a life for ~~ix~~ a life." They say they will meet force with force and fight until White domination is ended. The organisation claims to be the striking force of the banned ~~xxxx~~ liberation organisations, and to support the policy of the illegal African National Congress. There is no doubt now that the activities of Umkonto will spread. And as government-imposed

violence is increasingly met by violence, even South Africa's best friends may be forced to back their verabl criticism of apartheid with stronger action. They are truly alone against the flood of world progress. This at least will provide some comfort to the men and women who now face five years of loneliness and isolation.

NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM

A number of speeches and documents by Nelson Mandela were cited as evidence against him in the 4½-year long Treason Trial. The excerpts given below are from a speech he made in 1953, and are taken from the official record of the Trial. 340

(The speech begins by describing the ferment of new ideas that stirred the people for many years, until the people began to speak not in words, but in "the language of action", which brought about the Defiance Campaign.)

"By the end of 1952 more than 8,000 people of all races had defied. The Campaign called for immediate and heavy sacrifices. Workers lost their jobs, chiefs and teachers were expelled from the service, doctors, lawyers and businessmen gave up their practices and businesses and elected to go to jail. Defiance was a step of great political significance . . . It inspired and aroused our people from a conquered and servile community of 'yes-men' to a militant and uncompromising band of comrades-in-arms. The entire country was transformed into battle zones where the forces of liberation were locked in immortal conflict against those of reaction and evil.

"Today we are under totally different conditions. By the end of July last year (1952) the campaign had reached a stage where it had to be suppressed by the Government or it would impose its own policies on the country. The Government launched its reactionary offensive and struck at us."

(The speech details the arrest and trial of Congress leaders, the passing of two new, extremely repressive laws.)

"We had to analyse the dangers that faced us, formulate plans to overcome them and evolve new plans of political struggle. A political movement must keep in touch with reality and the prevailing conditions.

Long speeches, the shaking of fists, the banging of tables and strongly worded resolutions out of touch with the objective conditions do not bring about mass action and can do a great deal of harm to the organisations and the struggles we serve. The masses had to be prepared and made ready for new forms of political struggle. We had to recuperate our strength and muster our forces for another and more powerful offensive against the enemy. To have gone ahead blindly as if nothing had happened would have been suicidal and stupid.

"The old methods of bringing about mass action through public meetings, press statements and leaflets calling upon the people to go into action have become extremely dangerous and difficult to use effectively . . . These developments require the evolution of new forms of political struggle.

341

(After dealing with the bannings and proscriptions of Congress leaders, and the worsening conditions of the people, Mandela speaks of the Government's readiness to drown the whole country in blood to preserve White supremacy. He speaks of the powerful revolutionary eruptions throughout Africa.)

"The grave plight of the people compels them to resist to the death the policies of the gangsters that rule our country . . . Action has become the language of the day. The ties between the working people and the Congress have been greatly strengthened. This is a development of the highest importance for in a country such as ours a political organisation that does not receive the support of the workers is in fact paralysed on the very ground on which it has chosen to wage battle. . . "

The speech then outlines the M-plan to consolidate the machinery of Congress, build local branches and extend and strengthen the ties between the organisation and the people. He also warns against pace-seekers, splitters, saboteurs, agent-provocateurs, informers and even policemen who had infiltrated into the ranks of the Congress.

"In Congress there are still shady characters who masquerade as progressives but are in fact the bitterest enemies of the organisation. We cannot classify these men by looking at their faces, or listen to their sweet tongues, or by their vehement speeches demanding immediate action. The friends of the people are distinguishable by the ready and disciplined manner in which they rally behind their organisations, and their readiness to sacrifice when the preservation of the organisation becomes a matter of life and death . . .

"To overthrow oppression has been sanctioned by humanity and is the highest aspiration of every free man. Kotane, Marks, Bopape, Tloome and I have been banned from attending meetings and we cannot join and counsel you on the serious problems that are facing our country. We have been banned because we champion the freedom of the oppressed people of our country and because we have consistently fought against the policy of racial discrimination in favour of a policy which accords fundamental human rights to all . . . We are prisoners in our own country because we dared to raise our voice . . .

"You can see there is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires. Dangers and difficulties have not deterred us in the past, they will not frighten us now. But we must be prepared for them like men who mean business and who do not waste energy ~~and~~ ⁱⁿ vain talk and ~~in~~ idle action. The way of preparation for action lies in our rooting out all impurity and indiscipline from our organisation and making it the bright and shining instrument that will cleave its way to Africa's freedom."

Collection Number: A3299

Collection Name: Hilda and Rusty BERNSTEIN Papers, 1931-2006

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: **Historical Papers Research Archive**

Collection Funder: **Bernstein family**

Location: **Johannesburg**

©2015

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the *Hilda and Rusty Bernstein Papers*, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.