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# SECHABA

official organ of the african  
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## THE YEAR OF THE WOMEN



## Albertina Sisulu



# SECHABA

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P. O. BOX 38, 28 PENTON STREET  
LONDON N1 9PR UNITED KINGDOM  
TELEGRAMS: MAYIBUYE · TELEX: 299555ANCSAG · TELEPHONE: 01-837-2012

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# EDITORIAL

## THE YEAR OF THE WOMEN

The ANC has declared 1984 **The Year of the Women**. There is ample reason for this. The declaration of 1984 as The Year of the Women is a tribute to the militant struggles waged by the women of South Africa – that mighty detachment of our revolutionary struggle for national liberation and social emancipation.

The year also marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Federation of South African Women on April 17th, 1954. The Federation heralded the beginning of a united front of democratic women's organisations of the oppressed black women and democratic white women, a front that cuts through artificial barriers created by apartheid.

Who are these women?

They constitute more than 50 per cent of the population. They earn less than their men. The black men earn less than the white men and there are different wage scales for black men of different nationalities – Coloured, Indian and African. It is therefore obvious that the African women are paid the least. They are the most overworked and the most underpaid section of the society.

They suffer triple oppression, as members of the nationally oppressed black majority, as members of the working class and as women. Therefore, their struggle for 'equal rights' is closely interlinked with the struggle for national liberation and social emancipation. It is an aspect of it, or, if you like, it is 'subordinate' to it. We hasten to say that by 'subordinate' we do not mean it has to wait for freedom day. We must start now (if we have not started) to free ourselves from 'male chauvinism' and its counterpart, 'feminism.'

Women do all sorts of menial and de-

grading jobs such as taking care of children of white women, while nobody looks after their own children. They work on the white farms, while their children are being snatched to work as child labourers on other white farms. Their husbands work on the mines in the bowels of the earth, while they remain at home. Phyllis Ntantala has described the lot of these women in these moving words:

"It is the tragic story of thousands of young women who are widows long before they reach the age of thirty; young married women who have never been mothers; young women whose life has been one long song of sorrow – burying one baby after another and lastly burying the husband – that lover she has never known as husband and father. To them – both men and women – adulthood means the end of life; it means loneliness, sorrow, tears and death; it means a life without a future because there is no present."

What about the women political prisoners? The banned and banished? And those 'widows' whose husbands have been forced into exile? Those women and girls whose husbands and fathers are either in gaol – some serving life sentences – or have been murdered?

There are scores of women who are daily harassed by the racist regime. If there is one woman we have to single out – as an example of many – it is **Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu** (in our front cover picture).

Faith in the inevitable destruction of apartheid has given Albertina Nontsikelelo 1





*Women in South Africa fetch water from a communal tap*

Sisulu strength and courage for forty years. No person could be said to have suffered more persecution for their political views and activities than this inspiring woman.

Albertina Sisulu was banned for 18 years — longer than any other person. She has been detained and gaoled several times, her husband has been in gaol for twenty years, sentenced to life imprisonment, two of her family have fled into exile while others have been detained and banned. Now she faces im-

prisonment for trumped-up charges because the apartheid authorities have been unable to silence her by other means.

Albertina was born in the Transkei and trained as a nurse and midwife. Her political activity began in 1944 after she married Walter Sisulu. In 1948 she joined the ANC Women's League and became active in this and the Federation of South African Women. In 1963 she was elected Provincial President of the Transvaal branch of the Federation of South African Women.





*A queue of unemployed women workers in Cape Town*

In 1964 she received her first banning order. This was renewed in 1969, 1974 and 1979. The terms of her orders have changed, but all the time she could not be quoted nor enter a school or factory or take part in any social gathering without special permission. She was also required to apply for permission to visit her husband, Walter, on Robben Island.

Despite the attempts of the regime to minimise her influence, when her ban was lifted in July 1983 she had become one of the best-known anti-apartheid campaigners. Within a month she assumed a leading position in the Transvaal section of the United Democratic Front, and in August 1983 was elected one of the three presidents of the national United Democratic Front.

The regime's latest attempt to silence her will be about as successful as previous ones. Albertina will not be cowed by a prison sentence — no matter how long. Neither will her influence wane: she has become one of the martyrs of our revolution.

In this **Year of the Women**, let us highlight the situation of the women under apartheid.

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**ZEMK' INKOMO MAGWALANDINI -**



*Dr. W. B. Rubusana*

**THE LIFE AND TIMES  
OF W. B. RUBUSANA  
(1858-1936)**

**By Palo Jordan**



*On the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of the ANC, Pallo Jordan commemorates this event with an article on one of his heroes, Dr W B Rubusana, a founder-member of the ANC. In the light of the massacres, tortures and arrests in Mdantsane, the tribute is a fitting one.*

The 21st September 1910 will long be remembered in the annals of the Cape Provincial Council. On that day, the first and the last African ever to be elected to serve as a member of the Provincial Council won the contest for the Thembuland constituency. The event, which in most other countries would have been unremarkable, caused quite a stir in South Africa.

To the diehard white bigots it was the realisation of their worst fears. One African in the seats of a legislative body, even on the provincial level, promised hundreds more tomorrow. Ironically, it was precisely the same line of reasoning that excited jubilation among the African communities in all four of the recently unified provinces of South Africa. Newspaper articles celebrated the event in bold-type headlines, lengthy editorials were written either in approbation or disapproval, praise poems were composed to memorialise the name of the successful black candidate — Dr Walter Benson Rubusana, a fifty-two-year-old minister of the Congregational Church, living and working in East London.

Walter Rubusana's candidacy in the Provincial Council elections of 1910 was correctly considered by all observers as a bold step indeed. Two years previously, in an editorial written by John Tengo Jabavu, the African electors of the Cape had assured the white electorate that they felt no need to put forward African candidates in elections because of their faith in the fairmindedness of their white counterparts. Such faith had been found to be misplaced when the Constitution for the Union of South Africa was drawn up with its notorious 'colour bar' clauses. Rubusana's candidacy was a response to this affront, as well as an act of political

self-assertion on the part of the African electorate of the Cape who had too long allowed themselves to live in the shadow of the white liberal political establishment. Rubusana was chosen as the instrument for these purposes because of the prestige he enjoyed within the black community and in recognition of his personal contribution to the political struggles of that community.

### **Rubusana's Career**

Rubusana was born on 21st February 1858 at Mnandi in the Somerset East district of the then Cape Colony. His father, Rubusana kaMbonjana, was a senior councillor (umphakathi) to the Paramount Chief, Sandile kaNgqika. Like many of his peers Rubusana kaMbonjana had been influenced by the presence of Christian missionaries in the midst of the Xhosa people. He sent his sons to the nearby mission school, where he hoped they would learn and master the skills which the white colonialists were applying with such great effect against the African people. After acquiring a primary school education, Walter Benson Rubusana was admitted to Lovedale, the Free Church of Scotland mission school on the banks of the Tyhume River. Here, under the tutorship of Dr James Stewart, he studied for the Cape Teachers' Certificate, passing the final examination with a distinction in 1878. Rather than going out to teach, he remained at Lovedale to study theology under the guidance of Dr Stewart and the Reverend Andrew Smith.

In 1880 Walter B. Rubusana left Lovedale to take up a teaching post at the Peulton mission station, where he also worked as assistant pastor. It was at this post, in 1883, that he married Deena Nzanzana, his first wife, who bore him five daughters and a son. He remained at Peulton until his ordination as a minister of the Congregational Church in 1884, at which time he transferred to East London, which was to be his residence for the rest of his life.

### **The 'Red' and 'School' People**

The decade during which Rubusana was born witnessed the military defeat and econ-



omic destruction of the Xhosa kingdom. It was inaugurated with one of the most bitterly fought frontier wars, which coincided with the so-called 'Second Hottentot Rebellion.' The Xhosa kingdom and its allies, the rebels of the Kat River Coloured Settlement, proved no match for the powerful British Empire. After three years of war the Xhosa sued for peace. In 1857 the remnants of the kingdom were convulsed by the Nongqause messianic movement, which irrevocably destroyed the economic base of Xhosa society. In 1858, the year Rubusana was born, more than 5 000 passes were issued to Africans in the Eastern Cape to enter the service of white farmers as labourers. The division between African traditional society and the agrarian capitalism of the Cape Colony was disappearing, and thousands of Africans were being absorbed into the white-controlled economy as a subordinate class of labourers.

Apart from military conquest, other factors conspired to enhance the rapid acculturation of the Africans of the Eastern Cape to the Cape colonial society. Missionaries had been active amongst the Xhosa since the 1790s. A small but growing body of Christian converts living and working amongst their traditionalist brethren were carriers of the ideas, values and skills of 19th century Europe. The traditionalists saw the converts as a potential source of subversion, whom they designated 'amagqoboka' – the penetrable ones. The converts in turn regarded themselves as a community of the elect, calling themselves the 'school people,' as distinct from the 'red people' (derived from the red ochre traditionalists used to decorate their bodies).

State policy during the 1850s and 60s dovetailed well with these divisions amongst the Africans of the Cape. The British governor, George Grey, was intent on destroying the political and moral authority of the traditional Xhosa leaders, who had been the spearhead of anti-colonialist resistance for the past seventy years. One means of achieving this was to sponsor the converts as an alternative centre of moral authority. In terms of the new

constitution granting the Cape Colony representative government, all British subjects who fulfilled certain property qualifications were eligible to register as electors. This colour-blind constitution had as its objective the creation of a racially mixed agrarian capitalist society dominated by a class of well-to-do capitalist farmers. Many of the African converts had already been absorbed into this stratum of colonial society, owning extensive farms which produced grain, cattle, wool and other cash crops for the market. Walter Benson Rubusana naturally found his niche in this section of the black community, when he reached maturity.

### **Imumba Yama Nyama**

Rubusana began his professional life during a period of intense political activity. In 1882 the South African Aborigines' Association, known in Xhosa as Imumba Yama Nyama, was founded by a group of African peasants. 1884 saw the inauguration of two more significant movements, the Native Electoral Association, led by John Tengo Jabavu, and the Native Education Association, led by Elijah Makiwane. In November of that year the first issue of *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the first independent African newspaper, rolled off the presses in Kingwilliamstown.

Imbumba, the Native Electoral Association, the Native Education Association and *Imvo* were all the creations and institutions of the growing Christian African elite, made up of a few rich farmers, hundreds of small property owners, a sprinkling of professional men and a number of skilled craftsmen. Most of them regarded the institutions of the Cape Colony as a sound foundation on which to build a common society embracing black and white. Like the liberal white politicians of the Cape they spoke in terms of 'equal rights for all civilised men,' and had formed political organisations to secure and extend their political rights. During the 1880s events beyond their control were destined to reverse their political fortunes.

### **Gold Mines and Mass Labour Force**

The opening of the Witwatersrand gold-



fields in 1885 was the critical watershed of South African economic history in the 19th century. Within a few months what had formerly been bare veld was transformed into a teeming boom town named Johannesburg. Fortune hunters from all over the world swarmed into the Rand, capital from South Africa and abroad flowed in to exploit the new-found wealth. After a few years of unrestrained outcrop mining, the seams close to the surface had been exhausted, and deep level mining had to be pursued to get at the rich seams of gold-bearing rock locked beneath the ground. In this situation the small-scale operator was unable to compete with the big mining companies that had made their fortunes in diamond mining. Consequently, within a decade, gold mining was virtually monopolised by a handful of big mining corporations capitalised by local and international bankers.

The mining industry's primary requirement was a mass labour force which could be had by the expropriation of the African peasant from the land. The precepts of 'Cape liberalism,' elaborated in the context of the Cape's agrarian capitalism, had to be replaced with a comprehensive programme to separate the African peasants from their land, shackle them with poll taxes and pass laws, so that they could be herded in droves to minister to the ever-growing needs of the gold mining industry. To achieve this, the African peasant had first to be politically disarmed by dilution of his franchise rights.

The first major step was taken in 1887, when the Parliamentary Voters' Registration Bill was placed before parliament, ostensibly with a view to preventing 'uncivilised' blacks from acquiring the franchise. The annexation of the Transkei to the Cape Colony that year would have added some 30 000 Africans to the electoral register of the Cape. The 1887 Act, by excluding communally-held land from the terms of qualification for the franchise, was clearly aimed at holding down the numbers of African voters. Five years later, in 1892, the Franchise and Ballot Act imposed a literacy test on all prospective black

voters. In 1894 the Glen Grey Act established the Bhunga, or council, system of indirect rule over Africans in the reserves. The Glen Grey Act sounded the death knell of Cape liberalism and shut the door against the ideal of a common society, by setting up a special body of laws exclusively applicable to the African people.

### **Jabavu and the Liberals**

Up until this time the African electors in the Cape had employed a simple but apparently effective strategy devised by John Tengo Jabavu and other leaders of the Native Electoral Association. They realised that, being few in numbers and being concentrated in a few pockets of the Eastern Cape, their best hope was to utilise a strategy of *en bloc* voting to support one parliamentary candidate.

In 1883 Jabavu had formed a close association with three of the Cape's leading liberal politicians: James Rose Innes, John X Merriman and J W Sauer. He acted as Rose Innes' election agent in 1884, securing the bloc vote of the African constituents. Rose Innes and his friends realised that they owed these African voters a debt of gratitude, and were therefore amenable to political pressures from that quarter. The leaders of the Native Electoral Association (NEA) in turn hoped to use the African bloc vote to keep liberal politicians in parliament as a means of resisting the racist pressures of the Afrikaner Bond. Jabavu personally tried to convince the coloured political leaders to join in such efforts because he realised that the Bond's policies would result in the disfranchisement of all Blacks.

The NEA strategy was viable so long as their aims did not conflict with the commitments the liberal politicians had incurred in other quarters. Once having elected a liberal to office, there was little the African voters could in fact do to hold him to his promises. A case in point was James Rose Innes. In 1894 Rose Innes supported the Glen Grey Bill in the full knowledge that its provisions seriously compromised the interests of his African constituents.



These experiences had a profoundly disillusioning effect on Rubusana and his peers. They began to question the wisdom of Jabavu's strategy of alliance with the liberal politicians, and sought to devise a new one based on independent African organisations. This group coalesced around Nathaniel Cyril Mhala, and founded a second newspaper, *Ilizwi Labantu*, in 1898. While the *Ilizwi* group necessarily also had to employ a parliamentary strategy, they refused to be constrained by considerations of persons and past association. They insisted on judging the white politicians on their deeds rather than the fine words pronounced on the hustings. In many quarters their paper was greeted with enthusiasm by African voters who were tired of Jabavu's highly personalised style of leadership.

Despite their radicalism, Rubusana and his associates could not see beyond British imperialism. During the Anglo-Boer War they all threw their support behind Britain. Rubusana and other ministers of religion lent their moral authority to enlisting African labourers, wagon drivers, scouts and hundreds of other non-combatants to contribute towards the British victory, which finally came in 1902.

Rubusana never knew that the promises made by the imperial government and its mouthpieces in South Africa would amount to little more than hot air unless the African electors could exert organised pressure to hold them to their words. Thus in 1902 he was instrumental in calling together a number of African leaders in the Cape, to found the South African Native Congress. Though the South African Native Congress (SANC) had countrywide ambitions, it was in fact confined mainly to the Cape. Amongst its first actions was a petition addressed to Joseph Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain, reminding him of the fine promises his predecessors had made to the black British subjects in South Africa.

Chamberlain and his Liberal Party ministry were however committed to doing a great deal with the Boers. A tidy sum of three

million pounds was voted towards the rehabilitation of the former Boer republics, and by 1907 both the Transvaal and the Free State were granted responsible government, with their old racist constitutions unchanged. That year the SANC again took up the issue of black political rights, in a petition addressed to the King. In it they pleaded the loyalty of the average black South African to the British Crown and Empire, and called for the retention of the imperialist connection, as this (they hoped) would be a moderating influence on the racism of the South African white population. Neither of these appeals bore any fruit, and the movement towards the political unification of the four colonies steadily gained momentum during that first decade of the twentieth century, despite the vocal protests of the African and coloured political organisations.

#### **Zemk' Inkomo Magwalandini**

The other important formative influence on Rubusana was his religion. He was a dedicated minister of the Congregational Church, participating in its councils and actively involved in proselytising its message to the African people. He translated a number of Congregational texts into Xhosa, and was also active in the Native Education Association, led by Elijah Makiwane. As the descendant of a respected traditional statesman, Rubusana was in a position to persuade many of the Chiefs in the Ciskei and Transkei to open up schools and churches in their districts.

As a recognised authority on the Xhosa language, he was appointed to serve on the Xhosa Bible Revision Committee, set up to refine the translation supervised by Tiyo Soga in the 1850s. He personally supervised its publication in Britain when he accompanied the Thembu king, Dalindyebo, to attend the coronation of King Edward VII in 1904. During his stay in London he also published his first book, *Zemk' Inkomo Magwalandini* (Defend Your Heritage), an anthology of traditional epic poetry, didactic Christian essays and Church history. (Karis and Carter, in Volume 4 of their *Documentary History*, mistakenly refer to it as a collection of prov-





*The ANC delegation to Britain in 1914. Left to right, Dr W B Rubusana, T Mapikela, the Reverend J L Dube, Sol Plaatje and S Msane*

erbs.) As one of the earliest collections of the oral poetic tradition, the book was a remains of inestimable historical and literary value.

*Zemk' Inkomo Magwalandini* reflects the two dimensions of Rubusana's political thinking. He was a committed modernist, represented by his espousal of Christianity and western education, while at the same time recognising that there were a number of abiding values in traditional African society. By re-affirming the aesthetic validity of traditional modes of literary expression, Rubusana was also performing a patriotic task — emancipating the African intellectual from the cultural and psychic enslavement imposed by servile imitation of western canons.

By the end of the decade Rubusana was universally recognised as one of the leading black politicians in South Africa. Amongst Africans his status was second only to that of John Thengo Jabavu. Thus, when Jabavu withheld his support from the South African Native Convention, which met in Bloemfontein in 1909, it was natural that Rubusana

was chosen as its President. In this capacity he led the black deputation to London in June of that year in an attempt to have the 'colour bar clauses' expunged from the draft constitution.

The 1909 deputation to London was an historic landmark, being the first occasion during this century that African and Coloured formed a united front in pursuance of common objectives. Besides Rubusana, the deputation was composed of Dr A. Abdurahman, leader of the African People's Organisation (APO), D Dwanya, Matthew Fredericks, John T Jabavu, D J Lenders, Thomas Mapikela and one white parliamentarian, W P Schreiner. It was joined by Alfred Mangena, who was then resident in London.

The Independent Labour Party was the only British political party to support the deputation in London. The Aborigines' Protection and Anti-Slavery Society, long associated with lobbies for more humane colonial policies, assisted in obtaining access to members of parliament, and later an interview with



the Secretary for Colonies.

The deputation had two main objectives – reversal of the ‘colour bar clauses’ and preventing the incorporation of the three British territories (Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland) into the Union until the white public forswore racism. Everyone they met listened politely to their arguments, but at the end of the day the Act of Union was passed, with the ‘colour bar clauses’ intact. The deputation did succeed however in preventing the absorption of the High Commission territories.

Rubusana returned home with his deputation in September 1909 to report that they had been unsuccessful. White South Africa duly marked the unification of the four colonies with great pomp and ceremony in May 1910.

Rubusana announced his candidacy for the Thembuland constituency in the Cape Provincial Council as soon as the elections were announced. Many who had mouthed sentiments of racial equality now joined the ranks of the arch-racists to denounce Rubusana for daring to contest the seat. Richard Rose Innes, the Independent Liberal politician and a long-time backer of Jabavu’s, recorded his disapproval in the *East London Dispatch*. Even Jabavu was less than fulsome in his support. All these impediments notwithstanding, W B Rubusana ran a most effective campaign. His contacts in the church and its related organisations provided a ready-made network to mobilise the voters; the SANC branches throughout the Cape and the newspaper *Ilizwi Labantu* provided rallying points for his supporters. When the results were announced on September 21st, Rubusana had won the seat. He had won as a champion of African rights, and it was this more than his black face that frightened the racists.

In 1911 Rubusana made his third voyage overseas to attend the Universal Races Congress in London. Two other black South Africans attended the congress: John Thengo Jabavu and King Dalindyebo of the Thembu. The conference, organised by the Ethical Culture Society to discuss race relations throughout the world, had attracted numerous part-

icipants from the United States, Asia and other parts of Africa. Among the American participants was Dr W E B du Bois, the father of Pan-Africanism, and at the time engaged in setting up the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People in the United States. Here Rubusana had the opportunity to rub shoulders with many of the leading black political figures of the world, exchange experiences, and broaden the international contacts of the South African movement.

The conference itself proved disappointing to the colonial delegates who attended. The Ethical Culture Society was practically apolitical in its approach to racism and national oppression. It was seemingly unaware of or unconcerned with the realities of imperialism – the immense profits being squeezed out of the colonies, the material stake important sections of the population in the metropolitan countries had acquired in colonial oppression. They seemed to regard racism, racial discrimination and national oppression as ethical problems which could be resolved by polite dialogue between its perpetrators and its victims. Rubusana, Du Bois and the others knew from experience that racism was sustained by a complex of institutions, backed up by armed force and grounded in the economic realities of mines, huge plantations, and a lucrative trade in raw materials. Only the organised power of the oppressed could effect change.

### **Rubusana and the Formation of the ANC**

Rubusana returned home more than ever convinced of the need for a national organisation. He and his colleagues had attempted to create such a movement in 1902, but had not been able to extend beyond the boundaries of the Cape. The idea of setting up a national organisation had been placed before the deputation to London in 1909 by Pixley ka-Isaka Seme. The time was obviously ripe to implement it in later 1911. Thus it came about that Rubusana was one of the hundred strong body of delegates who converged on Bleomfontein on 8th January 1912 to attend



the inaugural conference of the African National Congress. As an experienced political campaigner, he was appointed on to the constitutional commission chaired by Richard Msimang, and elected as one of the Vice-Presidents of the ANC.

The newly founded ANC was the brain-child of two generations of African politicians. The older group, amongst whom were Rubusana and his contemporaries, had acquired practically all their political experience in South Africa and had been reared in the traditions of Cape liberalism. The younger group, amongst whom were the young barristers, Seme, Mangena, Montsioa and Msimang, had trained abroad and were motivated by ideas of a continental emancipation movement which would enable the African peoples to make their unique contribution to world civilisation. Both groups however were adherents to the principles of 19th century British liberalism and appealed to that tradition when addressing the British government or its local off-shoot the all-White South African parliament.

The first test of strength for the ANC was the Natives Land Bill then being discussed by the South African parliament. The bill was yet another chapter in the hot house development of South African capitalism at the expense of the African peasant. Powerful economic interest groups in mining and White agriculture had agitated for the bill and there was complete concensus among all the parliamentary parties about its desirability. The bill sailed through three readings in the House of Assembly, piloted by the erstwhile 'friend of the Natives' Sauer and became law in June 1913.

The ANC launched a wide-ranging political campaign against the bill, including public meetings, letters to the press, memoranda to politicians and deputations to the Prime Minister. When all these yielded no results they resolved to send a deputation to Britain to persuade the British monarch to withhold his assenting signature which would make the act law. Rubusana was involved in every aspect of the Anti-Land Act Campaign and

featured prominently in every stage of its development. When the deputation to London was chosen it was inevitable that he would be amongst them.

This first ANC deputation to London was led by President Dr John L. Dube and besides Rubusana included Thomas Mapikela, Saul Msane and Sol T. Plaatje. As in 1909 the deputation lobbied MPs at Westminster receiving support from the Labour Party alone. It was finally granted an interview with the Secretary for Colonies on 24th June 1914. In his response the British Colonial Secretary offered the deputation no comfort and advised them that since the Act of Union the British parliament no longer had any jurisdiction over South African internal affairs. That being the case they should address themselves to the South African government.

The reverses of 1914 for Rubusana were crowned by a personal political defeat. When his term of office in the Cape Provincial council expired that year he decided to contest the seat once more. However on this occasion an old colleague with whom he had struggled shoulder to shoulder in many a campaign but with whom he had over the years had numerous differences took the field against him. This was John Tengo Jabavu, in the eyes of many the doyen amongst Black political leaders in the Cape. Jabavu had kept his distance from the South African Native Convention and withheld his support from the ANC. He had in fact tried to organise his own South African Races Congress in opposition to it. All these actions had cost him dearly in terms of his former prestige but he stubbornly refused to recognise that the movement of the African people had outgrown both his leadership and his politics. Obviously piqued by the stature Rubusana had acquired, Jabavu decided to run as a candidate in the 1914 election.

Some have suggested that Jabavu at this time was not acting in his own behalf but was the stalking horse of White politicians who resented Rubusana's incumbency. Whether this is true or not the consequences



of his action was that the bloc African vote was split between himself and Rubusana; 294 and 852 respectively. This allowed a White candidate who received every white vote in the constituency to take the seat with 1004 votes. This practically ended Jabavu's political career. He died seven years later, a lonely figure remembered more for his shortcomings than his strengths. Rubusana never sought to re-enter the lists for the provincial council seat after his defeat.

Rubusana and others arrived back in South Africa shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. They received the news while attending a special ANC conference convened to hear their report. The conference adjourned in order to enable the leadership to entrain for Pretoria where they offered the unequivocal support of the ANC and the African people for the war effort.

Rubusana personally offered his services to recruit 5,000 men provided the government was prepared to train them in modern warfare. The ANC leaders undertook to suspend all their campaigns and mass agitation for the duration of the war as a demonstration of loyalty. Smuts, on behalf of the government, thanked them for their declarations of loyalty but declined Rubusana's offer with words to the effect that since this was a "White man's war" he saw no reason why the Africans should take a hand in the fighting.

Rubusana was as much responsible for the decision to declare a moratorium on mass agitation during the war as the other ANC leaders. This was probably the biggest tactical error they committed. The government did not reciprocate their action by suspending the provisions of the Land Act. Instead it pursued them vigourously unimpeded by ANC agitation or organised opposition. After four years of ruthless application the Land Act became a *fait accompli* and by 1918 its social and economic consequences were irreversible. Having thrown away a tactical advantage the ANC was unable to pick the threads of the campaign when the war ended.

Rubusana and his colleagues in the ANC leadership viewed the war as an opportunity to demonstrate in practice their loyalty to the institutions of empire. Loyal service during the empire's hours of crisis, they thought, would not go unrewarded when better times returned. What happened after the war ended was an object lesson in the realities of imperialist politics.

In 1918 two South African delegations, one led by Sol T. Plaatje for the ANC, the other by J.B. Hertzog for the Afrikaner Nationalists, departed for Europe to present their respective cases to the British government and the allied powers at Versailles. The delegations represented divergent streams of political thought. The African nationalist delegation identified strongly with liberal democratic values – equality before the law, representative government, civil liberty – the ideals which the allied powers had purportedly waged the war to preserve. The Afrikaner nationalists were not only historically linked to the defeated central powers but rejected every precept of the liberal democratic tradition. What is more while the ANC leaders, quite misguidedly it is true, rushed to Pretoria to declare their loyalty, Afrikaner nationalist officers in the South African Defence Force seized the opportunity to raise a rebellion against Britain with a view to resurrecting the defeated Boer Republics. However, when the two delegations arrived in Britain it was Hertzog who received a sympathetic hearing. The ANC delegation returned empty handed while Hertzog returned bearing firm promises and an undertaking that South Africa would be granted greater autonomy within the imperial framework to accommodate the demands of the Afrikaner nationalists. The 1918 delegation to London was the last time that African political leaders appealed to Britain to intercede on their behalf.

In 1919 Rubusana was 61 years old. The constitutional commission on which he had served finally reported to the ANC conference that year. After an animated discussion the lengthy constitution they had draft-



ed was adopted with a few amendments. Though the constitution was couched in the accents of the liberal constitutionalist tradition the past seven years had drastically transformed South Africa and with it the African people. During those seven years the ANC had been steeled in a lengthy political experience. In and around the growing urban areas clusters of permanent urban African communities had sprung up composed of peasants driven off the land by the 1913 Land Act. These were to become the battalions of the national and class struggles that erupted across the length and breadth of the country in the subsequent decades.

### Rubusana Inspires Us All

Rubusana spent the last 17 years of his life in relative quiescence. Most of his notable contemporaries, Jabavu, Bokwe, Makiwane and others passed away during the early 1920s. After a lifetime of political struggle he was allowed to live out his last years as an elder statesman, occasionally consulted on important matters, but away from the cut and thrust of day-to-day politics. His name hardly features during the stormy years of the 1920s and 30s. He died on 17th April 1936 in East London at the age of 78.

Walter Benson Rubusana's life story spans the most crucial years in the shaping of modern South Africa. For nearly forty of those years he was actively engaged in the



most important political and social struggles of his country. As a man of the cloth, a writer and political leader he was in the forefront of the battles waged by his people providing leadership. Though we may, with the wisdom of hindsight, fault his judgement on occasion, there can be no doubt that he was a man of immense personal courage and integrity committed to the democratic ideal of a free South Africa. Like many of his contemporaries he experienced the decades leading up to and including Union as a period of shattered illusions. Rubusana's greatness lay in the fact that he did not for a moment allow these setbacks to demoralise him. He drew the appropriate lessons from each defeat, picked himself up and fought on. Unlike Jabavu he was willing to grow with the times and even learn from the younger men like Seme and Dube whom he joined in founding the ANC. The life and work of Walter Benson Rubusana are an important part of our democratic heritage from which we draw inspiration for the battles that still lie ahead of us.

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# THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE AND WORLD PEACE

By V. W.

When the historic Appeal for Peace and Life Against Nuclear War was adopted at the World Assembly for Peace and Life at Prague in Czechoslovakia in June 1983, by over 3 000 delegates from 132 countries, it was certainly the most outstandingly successful condemnation of the nuclear arms race ever since the Americans dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

The delegates were drawn from 1 843 national organisations, trade unions, peace,

women's, youth and student movements, political parties, churches and 108 international non-governmental organisations. The overwhelming majority clearly identified US imperialism as directly responsible for the arms race, especially the nuclear arms race which has reached such threatening proportions today.

The delegates expressed their gravest concern at the US and NATO decision to deploy new 'first strike' nuclear missiles in Eur-



ope, and of the frenzied attempts by them to impose on people the idea of the 'acceptability' of nuclear weapons, and of the possibility of carrying out a 'limited' or 'protracted' nuclear war.

### **The Appeal to the World**

The Appeal adopted declared:

"Preparation of a nuclear war is the most serious crime against humanity. But war is not inevitable. It is not yet too late to prevent a nuclear holocaust. Salvation is in the hands of the people themselves, of each man and woman, resolutely standing together for peace.

"The mass movement for peace is a powerful force, a determining factor in the international situation, capable of influencing the practical policies of governments in the direction of peace.

"The strength of this broad and diversified peace movement lies in its ability to act together. Whatever differences on other issues exist between us, we are strongly convinced that nothing must divide us in the face of our common purpose — to save peace and life, to prevent nuclear war."

The Final Appeal to All Peoples was in the following words:

"Let us not allow 1983 to become yet another springboard to a new and mortally dangerous round of the arms race; to further intensification of confrontation! Let us concentrate our efforts to achieve the most urgent demands of the peoples of the world."

Specifically ten appeals are made:

1. No to new missiles in Europe!
2. Yes to real negotiations on the reduction of all types of nuclear weapons in Europe!
3. Freeze all nuclear arsenals now!
4. No to nuclear weapons in the West or in the East, around the world!

5. Stop the arms race, nuclear and conventional!

6. Yes to nuclear weapon free zones!

7. For general and complete disarmament!

8. Peaceful political negotiations, not military confrontation!

9. The world's resources for peace and life!

10. Peace, freedom, independence and prosperity for all nations!

The nuclear 'first strike' doctrine of the previous and present US administration is based on the wholly erroneous and insane idea of a 'winnable' nuclear war in Europe. The NATO decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing II intermediate ballistic missiles in Western Europe would guarantee a pre-emptive first strike against the USSR, and the USA would be the ultimate victor.

It was the weakening of imperialism's general position, especially in the last few years, that brought about a sharp shift in the military and political strategy of the imperialist camp. Those who run military industrial monopolies and eventually determine the strategic policy of the Western powers, the USA first and foremost, find peaceful cooperation among peoples and states with different social systems unacceptable, and choose to thwart all national and social progress on the international scene.

### **Sheer Madness**

The sheer madness of advocating a nuclear war, irrespective of its form, be it limited, protracted, universal and so on, has been repeatedly confirmed by many research establishments since at least 1959.

As the recent report of the Swedish Academy of Sciences points out:

"The use of even a fraction of the estimated 60 000 nuclear weapons now in existence would result in the immediate death of 750 million people, with 340 million seriously injured. The atmosphere will be veiled by debris, which will hinder sunlight for weeks, possibly months. This will be followed by reduc-





a mandatory arms sanction by the UN Security Council in 1977, is attributed to the assistance given to the regime by the United States, Britain, Israel and other Western countries. This criminal collaboration with the apartheid regime jeopardizes international peace and security, and is in no small measure due to US imperialism's policy of 'constructive engagement' with the apartheid regime. The continuing efforts of the US to establish SATO, the South Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which would include South Africa, is a further danger to independent Africa and Latin America.

The dilatory strategy and machinations of the so-called Western Contact Group involved in the Namibian independence negotiations have further heightened international tensions and increased the likelihood of the notorious 'linkage' policy of Washington and Pretoria, which stipulates that Namibian independence be linked with the withdrawal of Cuban internationalist forces from Angola, thus frustrating the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435, and so delaying Namibian independence indefinitely.

The ANC has consistently backed the repeated calls for a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, ever since the UN decision on the matter in 1971. As Alfred Nzo has stated, "We offer broad support for the people of Mauritius in their struggle to retrieve Diego Garcia Island, which American imperialism has turned into a military base."

The call of the OAU and the African countries' statement declaring Africa a nuclear-free zone is fully endorsed by the ANC. The ANC further backs the call of the Prague Assembly for the immediate dismantling of US military bases in all regions of Africa.

The Prague Assembly also called for the immediate imposition by the Security Council of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions against South Africa under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The collaborators with the apartheid regime, with permanent seats on the Security Council, have consistently flouted international opinion by exercising their veto! The rapid militarisation of the

South African economy, which is on a permanent war footing, and its establishing of itself as a medium-scale arms exporter, is in no small measure due to the covert collusion of the US and its allies in supplying actual military hardware, expertise and licences.

The recent decisions of the Seventh Non-Aligned Conference in New Delhi demanded that all nuclear weapon states assume an obligation not to be the first to use these weapons, and work towards a comprehensive treaty banning nuclear weapon tests and freezing nuclear armaments.

Our national liberation movement is in solidarity with SWAPO and the people of Namibia, the PLO and the Palestinian people, the Polisario Front and the people of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front and the people of El Salvador, and FRETILIN and the people of East Timor.

It is clear that the national liberation struggle in the world today is an integral part of the world struggle for peace, which in turn is a guarantee for true lasting freedom, independence and prosperity for all nations.

The 1980s will have a special place in the history of the struggle for national and social liberation. In Indochina imperialism suffered its biggest setback since the second world war in its attempts to destroy the national liberation revolution.

The victories of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, supported by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and progressive forces of the whole world, demonstrated that imperialism had now less opportunity for obstructing the development of the revolutionary process. The elevation of anti-communism to the level of American foreign policy in the 80s is an ill-fated attempt to reverse the gains of the revolutionary forces of the world.

But this should not be interpreted to mean that imperialism is not in a position to reverse our gains. The experience of Grenada is an example and a lesson to all of us.



## Our Stand

Our national liberation organisation, the ANC, has a proud record of solidarity with the real forces for peace and freedom in the world. The Congress movement played a major part in the activities of the South African Peace Council which was set up in 1953, at the height of the cold war. Chief Albert Lutuli, President-General of the ANC, put the question of peace and war in its proper perspective in his Oslo speech when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961. And Nelson Mandela said in his Presidential speech of the Transvaal ANC Annual Conference in 1953 – it was read because he was banned:

**“We have been banned because we champion the freedom of the oppressed people of our country and because we constantly fought against the policy of racial discrimination in favour of a policy which accords fundamental human rights to all, irrespective of race, colour, sex or language. We are exiled from our own people, for we uncompromisingly resisted the efforts of imperialist America and her satellites to drag the world into the rule of violence and brutal force, into the rule of the napalm, hydrogen and cobalt bombs where millions of people will be wiped out to satisfy the criminal and greedy appetites of the imperialist powers. We have been gagged because we emphatically and openly condemned the criminal attacks by the imperialist powers. We have been gagged because we emphatically and openly condemned the criminal attacks by the imperialists against the people of Malaya, Vietnam, Indonesia, Tunisia and Tanganyika and called upon our people to identify themselves unreservedly with the cause of world peace, and to fight against the war policies of America and her satellites.”**

In this passage Mandela clearly points out the inter-connection between the struggle for national liberation, international solidar-

ity and world peace. The three go together because world peace is threatened by the existence of apartheid and our struggle is therefore a struggle to preserve world peace. This makes utter nonsense of Reagan's demagoguery which portrays us as 'international terrorists'.

The ANC has been a consistent champion of the cause of world peace, and “voices its full support for recent Soviet peace initiatives which are aimed at making this planet a secure place” (Alfred Nzo, 1983). This consistent principled internationalist support for the struggle for peace in the world finds concrete expression in the many international, regional conferences and meetings on peace in which our fighting vanguard has played and is playing a significant part.

Our leaders, President Oliver Tambo, Secretary General Alfred Nzo and the late Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, are members of the highest organs of the World Peace Council, in whose Secretariat the ANC is represented. In today's world a freedom fighter has to be a peace fighter for the freedom struggle as well as for the peace struggle since both are inextricably linked.

Our ANC delegation made a vital contribution to the recent Prague World Assembly particularly on the topic of “The Danger of War and the Problems of the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America.” On the specific subject of the “liberation struggle in Africa and the threat posed by the apartheid regime to independence and peace in Southern Africa” more than one hundred and fifty delegates participated and twenty-nine took part in the discussion.

In the light of the increasing threat against humanity, as a result of the imperialist policy of arms race and confrontation, the delegates stressed the inter-connection between Southern Africa and other regions of the world.

They all were unanimous in their assessment of apartheid, racism and colonialism as the bulwark of reaction and militarism in this region. They were adamant on the fact that the struggle against racism and apart-





*Workers and engineers, writers and scientists, veterans of the war, students and schoolchildren demonstrate in Moscow for peace and for an end to the arms race.*

heid is an integral part of the struggle for peace throughout the world.

Participants condemned the 'total war strategy' of the apartheid regime in the light of the massacres at Sharpeville, Soweto, Matola, Cassinga and Lesotho; its continued illegal occupation of Namibia; its invasion and occupation of Angola; its neo-colonialist policy of exporting counter-revolution to the front-line states, and last but not least its brutal fascist enforcement of oppression and super-exploitation against the majority of

the people in South Africa itself. The delegates condemned the recent execution of the heroes of Umkhonto we Sizwe, Jerry Mosololi, Simon Mogoerane and Marcus Motaung and demanded prisoner of war status for all captured freedom fighters.

The unity of peace forces in the world together with the fighters for national liberation will ensure that peace and independence will be won in this, the decisive decade of war and peace. Let us intensify our struggle against reaction and militarism.

# INTERNATIONAL

## **Austrian Solidarity with the ANC**

In the Federal Republic of Austria, a solidarity project called 'Cows for Morogoro' is providing material aid for the ANC agricultural and educational project near Morogoro in Tanzania.

The project is being organised by the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Austria, and was publicised at a press conference in Vienna on the 24th October, 1983. Comrade Tony Seedat, ANC representative in the Federal Republic of Germany, was invited to take part, and he was accompanied by Comrade Khulu Mbatha, a member of the ANC regional youth committee in the German Democratic Republic. Television journalists and other pressmen were at the conference.

The State Secretary of Austria, Johanna Donal, member of the Socialist Party of Austria, opened the conference, and her presence there was of great significance.

Contributions to the fund have come from the President of Austria, the Federal Chancellor and some Ministers, from the Chairman of the Communist Party of Austria, and from some trade unions and from solidarity groups. Tractors, generators and other material have already been bought and sent to Morogoro, and contributions are still coming in.

Comrade Seedat told the conference that though the racist regime claims that changes are being made in South Africa, there is no talk of eradicating the racist system. He said that our school buildings and agricultural projects at Morogoro are part of our struggle. Comrade Mbatha said that the school at Morogoro was putting into practice the educational aims of the Freedom Charter.

During their stay in Austria, both Comrade Seedat and Comrade Mbatha had the opportunity of having discussions with some of the people and organisations that have contributed to this project.

## **Peace or War?**

### **World Peace Council Meets in Greece**

From November 18th to the 20th, 1983, Athens was host to a session of the Bureau of the Presidential Committee of the World Peace Council. Vice-Presidents of the World Peace Council and leading personalities from national peace committees all over the world converged to discuss problems concerning war and peace. The Report to the Bureau of the World Peace Council stated:



"The world today has entered one of the most dangerous stages of its development. We have been witnessing that stage during the whole of 1983 when millions of people throughout the world were trying to prevent further escalation of the nuclear arms race. The most dangerous part of this escalation takes place in Europe, where, according to NATO's 1979 decision, new US missiles — Pershing IIs and Cruise missiles — are being deployed in a number of West European countries."

Since 1979 much water has flowed under the bridge. We have seen American missiles being stationed in Britain; West European parliaments and governments have agreed that their countries be used for stationing these deadly weapons — something which is tantamount to colonisation of Western Europe by the US. Who can forget that the Reagan administration invaded Grenada without consulting anybody? Who can deny that Beirut is being reduced to rubble with the connivance of the US or because of its machinations? Who doubts that Angola is being occupied and invaded by the racist South Africans because of the support they get from the USA, and that Kampuchea is being invaded by Pol Pot thugs who receive overt and covert support from the USA at times under the cover and guise of international organisations?

The Government of Afghanistan has had to delay some of its development plans because of threats from outside. The Indian Ocean has been reduced to an American lake, and the British base on the Falkland Islands is a threat to the Latin American people.

These are some of the questions which were discussed in Athens. There was a spirit of solidarity and comradeship. The delegates identified their common enemy, and mapped out a common programme of action. Romesh

Chandra, President of the World Peace Council, expressed this spirit when he said that international solidarity makes us all strong.

On an optimistic note the Draft Programme of Action for 1984 stated:

"Humanity faces a crossroads. We must choose either the road of disarmament and peaceful co-existence, or face nuclear annihilation. The peace movement possesses the necessary power to ensure that the right choice is made. But the maximum power can only be unleashed through co-operation and joint actions. The World Peace Council invites everybody who is working for peace to participate in establishing a united front of all peace forces, in spite of all differences in other fields, to secure our common aim: the preservation of peace."

The ANC was represented by Francis Meli, who represented Alfred Nzo, one of the Vice-Presidents of the World Peace Council.



# MURDERS IN GAOL — THE CASE OF BARBERTON

**By Jean Middleton**

In January 1983 the South African press reported the death, on the 29th December 1982, of three prisoners at Barberton in the Eastern Transvaal. Mayo Khumalo, Ernest Makathini and Mulakaza Xaba were said to have died of heat exhaustion, having collapsed while working in a temperature of over thirty degrees Centigrade, and 44 other prisoners were in hospital. Later, the Commissioner for Prisons, General Otto, announced that he had sent certain dossiers to the Attorney-General of the Transvaal for possible prosecutions.

The town of Barberton, in a Lowveld valley, is one of the hottest places in South Africa. The gaol there is a maximum security prison combined with a farm prison, and the commanding officer was later to tell the court in Witbank that 'difficult' prisoners are sent there; though how these prisoners are chosen is not easy to see, for it turned out that of the working party of the 29th December, one had been a cripple, one was nearly blind, and at least two had been asthmatic.

## **Blood from Floggings**

The fact that deaths had taken place at this prison came as no surprise to anyone who knew anything of the place. During the sixties and seventies, women political prisoners, both black and white, were held there and in Nelspruit Prison, which is under the same command, and they recall vividly the vicious nature of the administration. Of the khaki prison trousers that were brought for washing each week, at least one pair each week was caked with blood from floggings over the kidneys. They remember being told of a woman prisoner who had spent a year in solitary confinement for some prison offence, picking sisal with bleeding fingers, in her cell, and how the commanding officer boasted to visitors about how he made a practice of 'breaking' prisoners in the heat and toil of the sisal fields. The white women remember a young wardress, too naive to know that she was giving secrets away, telling them that a prisoner had been shot dead in one of those fields the day before (they had heard the shot). "But



it's all right," the wardress added, "We're going to say he was trying to escape." Barberton is known among the South African prison population as a 'bad' gaol, one of the most harsh and brutal in a harsh and brutal system. The prisoners who were moved there from Durban Point Prison just after Christmas 1982 later spoke in court of their dismay when they were told where they were going.

The notoriety of the gaol, however, had not spread to the general public in South Africa, and had certainly never been so much as hinted at in the South African press. In 1959, after a series of journalists had written pamphlets and articles exposing prison conditions, the Prisons Act was passed, to protect the Prisons Department from further unwelcome publicity. For twenty-four years, this act has in practice made it impossible to publish information about prisons or prisoners, unless the information has first been made public by being used as evidence in a court of law.

When the *Rand Daily Mail* tested the law in the mid-sixties, the prosecution that followed ended in a heavy fine for the newspaper, and another prison sentence for the ex-prisoner who had supplied the information. *Island in Chains*, Indres Naidoo's book about the ten-year sentence he served for sabotage on Robben Island, is banned in South Africa and so may not legally be read there. In the early seventies, when stories of brutality in Leeukop Prison were told in court, Justice Hiemstra condemned the prison administration. In the early eighties, the hearings of the Hoexter Commission of Enquiry into the structure and function of the courts made public the overcrowding in prisons, the number of child prisoners, and the enormous size of the South African prison population in relation to the population as a whole. Then, apart from one or two small items, there was no more news until January 1983.

#### 'Heat Exhaustion' Case

When, in August 1983, the 'heat exhaustion' case finally came to court in Nelspruit, it be-

came clear that the three men who had died had suffered from more than heat exhaustion, and indeed the trial might equally well have been known as the 'rubber truncheon' trial. Eight warders, four black and four white, who had commanded the working party of the 29th December, were charged with murdering three maximum security prisoners and of assaulting 34 others with intent to do grievous bodily harm, by beating them with rubber truncheons as they worked on a prison dam site in temperatures of thirty-five degrees Centigrade. The warders pleaded not guilty.

Before evidence could be led, there was an interruption. The first witness called for the prosecution, a man named Barry Bloem, serving a ten-year sentence, pulled a written statement out of his sock and read it to the court. It claimed that the Barberton warders had threatened to 'get' the 34 men who were to give evidence. The witnesses all refused to give their evidence unless they had an undertaking that they would not be returned to Barberton Prison, and one witness demanded a written guarantee. They wanted the case to be heard in Pretoria, but the Department of Prisons claimed that the prison there was too full to hold them, and the hearing was transferred to Witbank.

The prisoners claimed that they had feared for their lives ever since the events of the 29th December. After they had agreed to give evidence against the warders, the prison authorities had separated them out into different cells, saying that they wanted to prevent threats and intimidation; though one prisoner claimed he had been threatened and intimidated by prisoners in the cell he had been transferred to. Some potential witnesses had been put into solitary confinement on various pretexts, and Barry Bloem had tried to commit suicide during this period. There were claims that letters home had not been posted, that they had been offered better food if they refused to testify, and one prisoner, when he later came into the witness box at Witbank, complained he was hungry, saying that he had been deprived of five meals beforehand.



"We feel powerless as prisoners," their statement said, "We have to face the unforeseen ... We are in constant fear of our lives."

Clearly, it was for safety's sake that they so strongly wished to be together in one cell during the months before the case came up, for then, if one or more were killed, there would be others left to tell the tale. The desperate determination of these men to stand together and make public what had happened, their solidarity and co-operation, their obvious feeling that they had nothing left to lose, was one of the most notable features of this whole business, for only one man broke ranks.

During the course of the year 1983, it had been made plain that there had been grounds for their fears. In June, shots had been fired (so the official story went) to stop prisoners escaping from Barberton, and in July, warders on night duty had been overpowered by ten prisoners during an escape. At about the same time that the 34 were refusing to give evidence in Nelspruit, four long-term black prisoners at Barberton died in what was officially described as a 'brawl,' while three others, as well as two warders, had to be treated in hospital. In September, while the case was proceeding, a prisoner died (and again this is the official story) after an attempted escape. He was said to have attacked a warder, who defended himself with a stick. The warder must have been a highly skilled stick-fighter, for, while he suffered bruises and cuts, the prisoner's injuries were fatal; he was taken to Nelspruit Hospital for what appeared to be a broken arm, but later it was found that he had died of other injuries, a spokesman for the Department of Prisons said.

When at last the case for the prosecution in the 'heat exhaustion' trial opened in Witbank, only one witness, Masango, gave evidence conflicting with that of the others. The testimony of the other 33 was substantially the same.

This was the story.

A contingent of prisoners was transferred from Durban Point Prison to Barberton

on Tuesday 28th December 1982. Starting at two in the morning, they travelled for fifteen hours in a prison van, in a temperature of 30 degrees Centigrade, shackled in pairs at the hands and legs, with no food or water and no stops to relieve themselves. On their arrival at Barberton they were pulled, still shackled, from the back of the van, and assaulted.

The next morning, the men were sent off to work on building a dam outside the walls of the prison. There were several unusual features about this working party. First of all, though the prisoners were newly arrived at the gaol, they had not yet had the medical examination which prison regulations provide should take place on admission, and which, in practice, takes place the next morning at the time of the doctor's regular visit. Second, as the court was told, it is traditional that no working teams are sent out from Barberton Prison between the 12th December and the 5th January – it is the festive season and the time when the sun is most fierce, a time of long lock-up periods for the prisoners, while the warders relax. Third, though this party was accompanied by the usual two armed guards and two dog handlers with their dogs, it was considered necessary to send seven warders as well, four black and three white (the fourth white warder arrived at the site later). There was evidence that the purpose of the party was to punish the prisoners. There was also evidence that Lieutenant Niemand, acting head of the gaol, gave instructions that the convicts should be beaten, because some of them had sworn at a warder the day before. "Make the prisoners warm," he said, and picked warders who could swing their batons.

#### **Dogs Kept in the Shade**

At the site of the dam, the prisoners were ordered to push wheelbarrows loaded with gravel up an incline. Some prisoners testified that they were made to run with their wheelbarrows, there were no pauses for rest, and when their energy flagged they were beaten with truncheons. One prisoner said he was





*Prisoners in South Africa being subjected to a search*

beaten while running with his load, The temperature rose; it was so hot that the dog handlers kept their dogs in the shade; at one stage cooling drinks were brought for the warders; but to one prisoner who asked for water, a warder replied, "This is Barberton. Prisoners don't drink water. The sun drinks water."

Heat stroke causes dehydration, confusion and delirium, and the body should be cooled immediately. As the prisoners grew confused and began to collapse, they were beaten all the harder. Witnesses described

seeing other prisoners being 'pounded' and 'worked over.' One man said that when he regained consciousness after fainting, he was afraid to open his eyes for fear of being beaten again, and another said that, nine months later, he still suffered pain as a result of those beatings. Bloem was thrown into the dam and pulled out again; one man named Zuma, a cripple, was beaten because he couldn't dig properly.

At some point there arrived on this scene of desolation and anguish a certain Warrant

Officer Jordaan. Not among the accused, he was called as a witness, and was referred to in court as the prison 'medical officer.' His qualifications were vaguely described as being a 'nursing diploma' and 'eight years' experience.' There was little conflict between his evidence and that of the 33 prisoners, except in the matter of the part he himself had played in the events of that day. He was unable to explain to the court why he had left his medical bag behind when he had gone to the dam, nor, indeed, what had caused him to decide to go there at all. Anxious, no doubt, to appear in a favourable light, he claimed that he had gathered together those men who had collapsed into a 'field hospital' a little way away, where he gave them water and wiped their faces. The prisoners themselves described this 'field hospital' as a 'human dump,' in the blazing sun, alleging that Jordaan had refused them water when they asked for it, and had turned their faces over with his foot, telling them to look at the sun.

Jordaan said that when Warrant Officer Smit walked among this pile of unconscious and semi-conscious men, striking them with his truncheon, he did not ask Smit to stop, because Smit was his senior. It was, by the way, Smit who threw Bloem in the dam, Smit who told one of the witnesses, an asthma sufferer, "Here in Barberton there are no sick people," and ironically it was Smit who was overcome by pains in his chest when evidence was being led against him, causing the court to be temporarily adjourned.

All who collapsed were taken to the 'dump,' and it was probably there that Mayo Khumalo and Ernest Makathini died. Makathini had said he was asthmatic, and was even seen to show Jordaan a piece of paper he had in his pocket, but Jordaan replied that the doctor had written there was nothing wrong with him. One witness described how Makathini cried aloud "like a bleating buck," protesting he was sick and could not breathe, but the warders continued to beat him, and when he collapsed he was taken to the 'dump.' Khumalo pleaded with Stoltz, show-

ing him the operation marks on his stomach, but Stoltz called for a cloth, wrapped it round his hand to get a better grip on his truncheon, and went on beating. When Khumalo fell unconscious over his wheelbarrow, he, too, was wheeled to lie with the others.

At about this time, some of the black warders refused to join in, saying to each other, "They are busy finishing off our people. They are dying."

There is no doubt that the death of Mulakaza Xaba, at least, was directly caused by a blow from a truncheon. By the time Xaba had collapsed, the eighth warder (apart from Jordaan) had arrived, a young man of twenty, named Van Dyk. Van Dyk was not on duty at the dam, in fact he was due to go on leave that day, and it seems likely that his main reason for joining the others was his eagerness to use his truncheon. It was he who killed Xaba. When Xaba got up, dizzy and staggering, Van Dyk gave him a blow between the shoulder blades; Xaba screamed and dropped down, and after that never spoke again. Later, giving evidence in mitigation from the dock (for he did not go into the witness box) Van Dyk admitted that at the dam he had hit other convicts who seemed "lazy and unwilling to work," but he said he had struck Xaba on orders from Smit, who said Xaba was trying to escape. The judge dismissed this suggestion as "childish," and a witness who was ordered to load Xaba's body into a vehicle said that Xaba had tried to stagger away from the assaults, and not from the prison.

A doctor from Barberton testified that when he was called to the prison after these happenings, he found three dead men and "a room full of severely injured people," with marks of blows on their bodies, and in conditions of delirium, heat stroke and shock. Four were in a critical condition, he said, while others, covered in head and body wounds, required urgent attention.

#### **White Prisoners Have 'Good Behaviour.'**

The case for the prosecution was overwhelming. After it, the case for the defence came



as an anticlimax. The accused had pleaded not guilty, but none of them went into the witness box, and, apart from the officer commanding the prison (who spoke in mitigation) only the renegade witness, Masango, had a good word to say for them, stating that they had tried to break up a brawl and prevent the prisoners from hurting themselves. Counsel for six of the accused dismissed the story of the 33 complainants, saying that they had 'collaborated' over it, and asked for a verdict of culpable homicide.

The judge rejected the allegation of 'collaboration,' and effectively accepted the evidence of the 33 prisoners. He said of Van Dyk's assault on Xaba that it was "a border case of murder," and used strong terms in speaking of all the warders, saying that they were "heroes of the truncheon," who had assaulted unarmed and defenceless men.

The judge's verdict and the sentences that followed seemed to be out of proportion to his moral condemnation of the accused. His verdict was even more lenient than that asked for by the prosecutor, for he did not find any of the warders guilty of culpable homicide; instead, he found six of them guilty on various counts of common assault and assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm. In law, this meant that the warders could not reasonably have been expected to foresee that the men might die.

Two black warders, L C Makhola and F E Mahumane, were found not guilty on all counts, and discharged. Warrant Officer G L Smit was sentenced to an effective eight years, C T W Horn to five years, W Kobyané to three and a half years, J C Stoltz to three years and J Z Madonsela to one year. Van Dyk, the killer of Xaba, was sentenced to a mere two years' imprisonment.

It is impossible not to take notice of the contrast between these sentences and those given to the freedom fighters of Umkhonto We Sizwe, who get anything from twenty years to the death sentence for attacking installations, even when there has been no loss of life, and no one has been injured. Smit,

Horn, Stoltz and Van Dyk have short terms to serve, considering the gravity of their crimes, and their life in gaol will not be too onerous. As white prisoners, they are unlikely to be called upon to do hard physical work in the sun, and it is even less likely that they will ever be on the receiving end of a rubber truncheon, for they will be treated as colleagues rather than as prisoners by the warders who guard them. They will almost certainly be sent home on parole after they have served a third or a half of their time, and there is no doubt at all that they will get remission for 'good behaviour,' for, under South African law, the only prisoners not eligible for remission are drug offenders, cattle thieves and political prisoners.

### Violent Death

This points to another contrast. While the four convicted warders will have an easy life in gaol, every black prisoner in South Africa faces possible violent death, and knows it. In Barberton, as in other gaols, it is black men prisoners who are taken out in 'work teams' guarded by warders with guns, dogs and batons.

In a reply to a question put in the white parliament in Cape Town in April 1983, the number of deaths among prisoners was given for the period from July 1981 till June 1982. During this time 183 sentenced prisoners died in South African gaols. Of these, 157 deaths were said to be due to 'natural causes,' 7 to suicide, 5 to 'accidents' and one to poison allegedly taken before arrest. 11 were said to have died as a result of assaults by fellow prisoners, one after an assault by a warder, and two were said to have been shot while attempting to escape. It is probable that these figures do not include any prisoners who died while being used as slave labour on white-owned farms, for prisoners on farms are classified as 'paroled.'

Prisoners not convicted of any crime at all are also in danger, for 16 unsentenced prisoners died during the period given, and it is public knowledge that some unsentenced prisoners die of electrocution. The Bultfont-

ein case of the early sixties showed that electric shock torture apparatus — at that time already being used on political detainees — was standard equipment at police stations and was being used on black prisoners suspected of a variety of crimes. Two cases of electric shock torture in police cells were made public in 1983, one in Dirkiesdorp in May (when a black man suspected of cattle theft died) and one in Woodstock in September.

Furthermore, the Barberton revelations cast considerable doubt on the reasons officially given for deaths in prison. Certainly, some prisoners do die because assaulted by other prisoners; Indres Naidoo describes the murders committed by gangsters on Robben Island; in a brutal system brutality will flourish, and the attempts made by the prison authorities to investigate these murders are, at best, half-hearted. But what exactly were the nature of the five 'accidents?' If the seven suicides were genuine suicides, what caused the despair that lay behind them? Were those two prisoners really trying to escape when they were shot? And what do officials of the South African prisons mean when they speak of death from 'natural causes?' What of the young diabetic woman whom the press reported had died in gaol in March 1983 because she was denied insulin — would her death fall into the category of 'natural causes?'

### **Prisoners and Doctors.**

The matter of this young woman brings us to another question that has been raised before (notably over the matter of Steve Biko's death) and which the Barberton evidence has raised again; and that is the question of the medical attention given to prisoners in South African gaols.

The lines of black prisoners standing in the open in the early mornings, summer and winter, waiting ready stripped for the doctor, are a familiar sight in the gaols. A regulation lays down that prisoners must be examined by the doctor on admission to any prison and may not be sent out to work until passed as fit; but the Barberton case shows how easily this rule may be broken at the whim

of the officer commanding the prison, and anyone who has been a prisoner in South Africa can bear witness to the perfunctory nature of the examinations. The murdered man, Mayó Khumalo, was not the only asthma sufferer on the work team that day; another man, who gave evidence afterwards, claimed to be asthmatic and said he'd been told to work in spite of it. There is plenty of evidence on record about the kind of care given to sick men by the 'medical officer,' Jordaan; he admitted in evidence that the medical bag he failed to bring with him did not even contain a clinical thermometer, and he had never been given any information on the symptoms and treatment of heat exhaustion. It was not until four months after the deaths at Barberton that the Prisons Department issued instructions about heat illness, with a recommendation that prisoners be acclimatised before being required to work in extreme conditions.

At the end of September 1983 the Minister of Justice promised an enquiry into Barberton Prison, to investigate the 'unsatisfactory aspects' referred to in the judgment, and to advise how to avoid a repetition. Little or nothing can come of this enquiry, and little or nothing is intended to come of it. To begin with, it is confined to Barberton Prison, and will not deal with the 'unsatisfactory aspects' of other prisons or of the system as a whole (it will not, for example, explain the cholera in Durban Central nor the shigella dysentery in Pretoria Central in February 1982, nor explain what steps the prison authorities have taken to avoid a repetition of these outbreaks). The commission is to be answerable only to the Minister, who does not have to make public either its findings or what steps he takes as a result. The investigations of the commission will be made public only if the chairman so decides.

### **The Ethos of Violence**

Worst of all are the terms of reference of the enquiry. It is to look into: the role of gang activities in the prison, whether the prisoners threaten each other's lives or intimidate each



other, whether the strains of overcrowding played any part in the events of the 29th December, 1982, and whether the lives and safety of members of the prison service are adequately protected. These stated aims bear so little relation to the reality of the evidence that came before the court at Witbank, it is as if the prisoners had beaten the warders, or each other, to death.

When, at the beginning of the Barberton trial, the prisoners insisted on being transferred to another prison, Justice Vermooten could only reply that the matter was in the hands of the Prisons Department, and in the end he could do no more than make a prison official available to deal with the prisoners' fears and their complaints. The case of Lieutenant Niemand, who gave the orders for the work team at the dam, has been handed over to the public prosecutor. If Niemand is convicted of any crime, he will be convicted as an individual, as the other warders were, and the abuses in the South African prison system will go unpublicised and unrectified. Self-protecting and self-preserving, shielded by legislation, this system is in all matters its own prosecuting counsel and its own judge.

The prison system, the unspeakably ugly and vicious events that took place at the dam at Barberton, and the punishments incurred, must all be seen in the context of racist South African society as a whole, and as part of an ethos of violence used by Whites against Blacks. Over the years, cases have been reported of white farmers who beat their black labourers to death, white householders who beat their black servants to death. More recently, in December 1982, there was a case of a white driver who drove his van several times over a black man on the road from Pretoria to Kempton Park; the victim died of multiple injuries and the driver was given R250 bail. In March 1983, a young white farmer in Namibia was gaoled for six years for killing an eighteen-year-old Namibian half his size, who had been sent to work on his farm; he chained him by the neck to a pole, without food or water, and later beat him to death with his fists, a bucket, a broom and a crow-

bar. In April, three black passengers died on a train when two young white brothers opened their compartment door and began firing at point blank range. The two accused later told the court that they hated Blacks, believed they had been correct in what they had done, and that given the opportunity they would do the same again. One of the brothers was given the death sentence in this case, but it is rare for sentences of more than five years to be imposed for crimes of this kind, when they come to court, and it is likely that, given the complicity of the white police, many cases go unreported, and never come to court at all.

### **The Nature of the Penal System**

The nature of the South African penal system is determined by the nature of the society it protects. It is well known by now that the gaols provide black slave labour for the white-owned farms and for contractors outside the gaols. More important, the prisons have a function in helping to ensure that the entire black population of South Africa is kept as a supply of cheap labour.

Numerous oppressive laws go to maintain apartheid, which is itself essentially a system of cheap labour. These laws are enforced by the gun, and a harsh and brutal penal system is part of a wider system, that of the organised terrorism of the state, which is kept in power by threats, intimidation and murder. The farmer in Namibia, the warders at Barberton, all were in a real sense defending something, the apartheid system that grants them their privileges, the system that the ANC and the soldiers of Umkhonto We Sizwe are fighting to overthrow.

## INVASIONS OF ANGOLA

By J. M.

*White Paper on Acts of Aggression by the Racist South African Regime against the People's Republic of Angola*, published by the Angolan Government, 1983.

Since 1975, when independence was declared in both Angola and Mozambique, the South African regime has never ceased to attack Angola with bombers, helicopters, airborne troops, cavalry, infantry, armoured cars, artillery, even dogs. For eight years, Angop, the Angolan news agency, has issued statement after statement, telling of destruction and massacre, but all these reports have had but poor coverage in the western press.

During 1983, the governments of both Angola and Mozambique made efforts to publicise the damage being done to both their countries by South African attacks, both open and covert. Paulo Jorge, the Angolan Foreign Minister, gave a press conference in London in February; Samora Machel addressed the Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in March, describing the destruction done in Mozambique, and he visited Britain in October. The Angolan White Paper was presented to London at another press conference in October, and some thirty or forty journalists were present, but once again little appeared in the press.

This White Paper gives an account of South African aggression against Angola in an extremely direct and factual way, beginning in 1975, when the forces of the racist regime invaded southern Angola in an attempt to reach Luanda before the declaration of independence. They set up organs of

UNITA government as they went along, for the support Pretoria gives UNITA has always been fairly open, in contrast to the support it gives the so-called MNR in Mozambique. FAPLA, the army of the MPLA, which had just fought a long war against Portuguese colonialism, succeeded in repelling the attack. After independence was declared, the Government of the People's Republic of Angola found itself in confrontation with South Africa and UNITA in the south and the western-backed FNLA in the north. It was then that it asked the Cuban Government for help.

Another section of the Paper gives a summary of no less than 352 acts of aggression between June 30th 1976 and December 5th 1981. They ranged from threats, in the form of troop concentrations on the border, to violations of air space by reconnaissance aircraft, bombing of buildings, theft or killing of herds of cattle, devastation of agricultural land, bombing of wells, mining of roads, strafing of schools, attacks on unarmed villages — on September 18th 1981, for example, troops on horseback and infantry with dogs burned down a village and massacred its population.

The International Commission of Enquiry into the Crimes of the Racist and Apartheid Regime in Southern Africa, meeting in Luanda in 1981, declared in its statement:

“Armed attacks and temporary military occupation of the territory by the South African army (penetrating as deep as 150 km) and violation of Angolan air



space, perpetrated by these forces stationed at the military bases in Namibia, are carried out systematically and almost daily."

Another section of the White Paper gives a summary of attacks during the first six months of 1982, together with a table of material damage done during that time; yet another, the resolutions on the situation in Angola taken by the Security Council between March 1976 and June 1980. The photographs are placed at the very end of the book: pictures of gutted buildings, the uniforms and identity documents of soldiers in the racist army, a map of Angola with the stamp of the United States Central Intelligence Agency, a captured napalm bomb.

In 1982, when Britain and the Argentine were fighting a war in the South Atlantic, the British press gave publicity to stores of napalm allegedly left behind by the retreating Argentinians. This news was treated as evidence of Argentinian brutality. At the same time these papers gave no space to reports from Angop that the Pretoria government had been using napalm in Angola. Earlier, in 1981, at the time of the invasion which the racist regime referred to as 'Operation Protea,' when the Angolan representative was reporting to the United Nations that the invading forces were 'killing everything that moved,' the Angolan Government invited the London papers to send correspondents, but not a single paper responded. Even now, the atrocities still taking place go virtually unreported in the capitals of the west.

With the exception of the team that made the documentary, *The Agony of Angola*, shown on British television in 1980, television journalists from the West have invariably gone through Pretoria to follow the progress of the UNITA forces, and have had a tendency to present UNITA as the liberators of the Angolan people. At the time of 'Operation Protea' a BBC correspondent went to Luanda, but he, too, described the invasion in the terms used by Pretoria — as an attack on SWAPO guerrillas — until, un-

hurt but badly shaken, he had to report that he and his team had themselves been strafed on the open road by South African aircraft.

All this time, the Pretoria regime has put out a lie that its strikes into Angola are 'defence' measures, in 'hot pursuit' of guerrillas. The Government of Angola tells a different story. Of the 352 attacks between the end of June 1976 and the beginning of December 1981, not more than half a dozen were directed against ANC, SWAPO and ZAPU installations, and these were refugee camps. The White Paper tells the story of attacks on refugees, civilians and the Angolan army. The main intention behind the attacks seems to be to murder, threaten and terrorise the people of Angola, to destroy their homes, their schools, their factories, their food and their means of producing food, their livelihood and their hospitals and health services (it was reported in 1983 that in southern provinces, so frequent have been the attacks and so many the injuries that the supply of blood transfusion equipment was for a while not equal to the need).

In maintaining its silence over what is really happening in Angola, the western press is protecting the policy of its own governments.

The International Commission of 1981, already mentioned, recorded that South Africa attacks Angola with arms from the United States, France, Belgium and the NATO countries,

"through direct importation, manufacture, under licence and fraud committed with export licences."

Jonas Savimbi has been invited to address the European Parliament. The legal and internationally recognised Government of Angola receives no support from the United States and the NATO countries. Support is given instead to the aggressor. After 'Operation Protea' the forces of the apartheid regime displayed in Pretoria all the trucks and other equipment it had captured in Angola. The powerful imperialist countries brought no pressure to bear on South Africa to make

reparations for this robbery. The only compensation the people of Angola received from the west came from the charity, 'War on Want,' which opened an appeal for private donations to replace what had been stolen.

In the United Nations, support for Angola has been overwhelming. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have taken resolutions condemning South African aggression, expressing approval for the stand taken by the Angolan Government, and rejecting the notion of 'linkage' between the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia and Cuban troops from Angola. The western countries continue to arm apartheid South Africa, and the western 'contact group' continues to support the 'linkage' plan.

Here, we should recall that the United Nations was founded after the war of 1939-1945 on the principle that small nations have the same rights to their own sovereignty as larger and more powerful ones. The principle was established because Nazi Germany, heavily armed, had defied the League of Nations by invading small countries and illegally annexing them one by one. The United States and the NATO countries, as well as South Africa, are now playing the same role that was then played by Nazi Germany.

It is hypocrisy for Pretoria to suggest that it fears the presence of Cuban troops in Angola as a military threat to itself, for not even the South African racists have been brazen enough to claim that Cuban troops have ever attempted to cross the border to attack them. It is possibly true that Pretoria has some reason to fear the presence in the front-line states of SWAPO and the ANC.

But a more important reason for the aggressive attacks is that the independent African states represent to the people of South Africa an example of people who have fought for their freedom and have won it, an example dangerous to the regime.

The most important reason for the attacks is that South Africa and the imperialist countries want control over these independent states. Their policy is one of systematic destruction of the existing economy

of these states, and the attacks of the so-called MNR on the port of Beira and the rail link with the inland countries is proof of this, for these developments are projects of the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference, and are attempts to make the front-line states economically independent of South Africa. These countries are rich in resources (such as the port of Beira, the still unexploited minerals of Angola) and they are potential sources of cheap labour.

In his address to the Fourth Congress of FRELIMO in April 1983, President Tambo said:

"... when imperialism held unquestioned sway over Southern Africa it constructed within our region a sub-system of exploitation, with its centre in racist-ruled South Africa. Within this sub-system Mozambique, Angola, Lesotho and other countries were assigned a special place as an exploitable hinterland from which the centre could draw human and material resources while not obliged to give anything in return."

The need to regain this 'exploitable hinterland' is clearly very important to the imperialist countries now. Pretoria and the investors of the west see the front-line states as fields for super-exploitation. They are trying to conquer these territories, and the armies of MPLA and FRELIMO and the internationalist Cuban forces are defending them. The successes of the ANC and SWAPO are contributing to this defence.

Because they loudly claim to give support to the principle of 'human rights,' and because the whole world now knows about the denials of 'human rights' that take place under apartheid, it is embarrassing for the governments and the newspapers of the west to give support too openly to the Pretoria regime. The press of the west does what, from its point of view, is the next best thing — it simply does not report what are some of the worst and most inhuman excesses of the South African racist regime.



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