

BULLETIN 16

A M E R I C A N S F O R S O U T H A F R I C A N R E S I S T A N C E

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A Note to Readers Americans for South African Resistance was organized at the time when the African and Indian National Congresses in South Africa were preparing for their non-violent campaign against unjust laws. Through AFSAR we raised some funds which we sent to South Africa to support the campaign and particularly to aid the families of those resisters who were imprisoned. Also we issued an occasional bulletin with news which came to us through correspondence.

Now, although the civil disobedience campaign in South Africa has been suspended, there have been important events taking place in South Africa and in Central Africa. AFSAR does not pretend to be a formalized organizational structure with a budget, literature of its own etc. We do feel, however, that it is important for us occasionally to issue a bulletin as significant news reaches us, especially as we can report on developments about non-violent moves toward freedom. Therefore, although we shall not have any schedule of publication, bulletins will be forthcoming from time to time about significant developments in South Africa or in other parts of the continent.

PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIS COUNTRY.....

My Time In Jail
by Manilal Gandhi

(Editor's Note The following excerpt from Manilal Gandhi's account of his experience in jail is from a South African publication which he sent us. We hope to receive his complete report at a later date. He served 38 days of a 50-day sentence at Gerniston Jail and Pretoria for defying the Malan segregation laws by joining an interracial group which in December 1952 entered a Negro section of Germiston without passes to hold a meeting. Thousands of Africans were similarly jailed in 1952 and 1953 for participating in the civil disobedience campaign.)

My heart is sore at the treatment meted out to the non-white prisoners in general and the African prisoners in particular. It is not an exaggeration to say they are being treated not as human beings but as beasts.

Prisoners are not only shouted at, but beaten up, knocked, slapped, fisted, charged by the African warders with sticks and by the white warders with batons.

Once while we were standing on parade waiting for the chief warden or the superintendent to come, whispering was going on. One African prisoner caught the warden's eye. The warden called him with an abusive shout ("Bastard" or "dog" is quite frequently used to call prisoners), gave him a slap on his face, a fist in his stomach and a kick on his back and made him stand aside.

When the chief warden returned, the warden reported to him that the prisoner was talking on parade. The chief warden, without stopping to hear the full story, ordered that he should have his two meals out, which meant that he was to be locked up for 24 hours and given only one meal, and in addition he would get a black mark on his ticket. The prisoner in question had, of course, no opportunity to tell the chief warden that he had already had his punishment from the warden.

There was another instance when an African prisoner was badly beaten by a white warden while working outside in a span. He was given a severe punch on the mouth and his top lip was swollen, which made it difficult for him to eat his food for two or three days. When he wanted to complain about this to the superintendent, he was prevented from doing so by the warden in charge. Such instances can be multiplied scores of times.

While I was in Germiston I was horrified to see one morning an African warden within less than a minute strike three African prisoners on their heads with a stick, making their heads bleed just because unknowingly they were standing in the wrong queue. The African warden was not checked for this action.

The only opportunity you get to have a wash is Saturday afternoon. The rest of the days you live in dirt and you eat dirt. The food is not clean, nor is it served in clean dishes. Mealie meal porridge and boiled mealies are about the only things which might be said to be properly cooked--though there, too, the porridge is sometimes too salty and sometimes there is very little salt in it. In mealie rice and beans you invariably find stones and dirt.

Prisoners had to eat their food squatting down on the ground in the open yard, which was exposed to wind and rain. If the wind blew, the dust would soil all the food and render it uneatable. If it rains all the food gets wet. I experienced this myself. The warders were all togged up in their overcoats and raincoats, standing watching the prisoners, who were being drenched while eating their food. It reminded me of the herdsman watching a herd of cattle or sheep grazing.

Prisoners are searched in a most indecent and degrading manner. They are stripped naked in the open. They are made to jump, widening their legs, to turn and bend down, exposing their anus. When I complained about this in Germiston jail, the superintendent said that was an old complaint which cannot be remedied. Some prisoners carry tobacco in their rectum and no exception

can be made between one prisoner and another.

Clean mats hardly ever come to the non-European prisoners, and if they do, they are not allowed to remain with them long. The blankets in Germiston were decent, but in Pretoria, they were thin and tattered and what was more, they were so full of lice that I suffered 15 sleepless nights scratching my whole body. I got sores all over.

I strongly feel that if we claim to be living in a civilized age, the conditions prevailing in our prisons in this country are a sad reflection on public opinion, which must be held responsible for these conditions.

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"JOB COLOR BAR CRACKS DESPITE MALANISM" This was the headline on a New York Times dispatch which said: "Behind the facade of apartheid, the system of race segregation with which Prime Minister Daniel F. Malan says he is safeguarding white supremacy in the multiracial Union of South Africa, more and more non-whites are entering industry and slowly but surely pushing the color bar upward.

"Actually, integration of non-whites into the economic life of the nation has proceeded faster and on a broader front during Dr. Malan's term of office than under any previous administration. This has been largely because of the post-war industrial and mining boom that has created a shortage of white as well as Negro labor. This scarcity was accentuated by Dr. Malan's stopping the mass immigration project launched by his predecessor, Field Marshal Jan Smuts, to attract whites from Europe."

Two recent indications of an anti-segregation trend were the vote against the color bar registered by white miners at the Roan Antelope mine on January 7 and the South African Labor Party's shift on January 20 from a white supremacy policy to one of "universal franchise for all literate inhabitants."

The Roan Antelope mine's white workers represent almost one fourth of the white persons in Northern Rhodesia's copper industry. Despite opposition from their own Malanite union leadership, the miners voted to eliminate from their agreement a clause which barred Negroes from skilled jobs.

UN Approves Continuance of Survey on South Africa By a vote of 38 to 11 with 11 abstentions, the United Nations General Assembly on December 8 authorized a special Commission to continue its study of race relations in South Africa.

As reported in the last Bulletin, the Commission on October 27 issued a 372-page report describing Prime Minister Malan's policy of white supremacy as a grave threat to the peace of Africa. The UN General Assembly's special political committee thereupon adopted a resolution calling on South Africa to set aside its policy of racial segregation.

Non-violent Campaign Continues in Northern Rhodesia "Even though both Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia have dropped their non-cooperation policies, we are determined to go on," writes K. D. Kaunda, secretary-general of the Rhodesia African Congress. "We are now busy mobilizing our forces."

The Congress program calls for "withdrawal of African labor from European farms, withdrawal of African labor from building contractors engaged in building houses for European immigrants and continued color-bar campaign in hotels, restaurants, public lavatories, churches, post offices, shops etc.

Direct Action At Lusaka Meat Stores A campaign of non-violent direct action to end racial discrimination at four Lusaka meat stores has resulted already in a change of policy at one of the establishments.

"To be fair to this shop, there was no pigeon hole shopping there even before the boycott, yet discrimination on grounds of color was practiced," states the Lusaka branch of the Northern Rhodesia African Congress, which is conducting the campaign.

Picketing of the other three stores continues despite the fact that a number of the pickets have been badly beaten by police.

British Block Pan African Conference By halting delegates at the Northern Rhodesia border, the British thwarted what was to have been the first regional conference of African Congresses with representatives coming from most of British Africa.

"Perhaps the Federation (of Central Africa) will become an Iron Curtain," was the comment of the Northern Rhodesia African Congress.

On December 9, the day before the 3-day conference was scheduled to open, word came that Delegate Borombo from Southern Rhodesia had been declared a prohibited immigrant. Next came a wire from the Tanganyika delegates stating that they had been refused entry.

A wire from Masopera Gondwe, the Nyasaland delegate said: "Thatcher Hobson Transporters provided no seat in bus." Colusion between the government and the road transport companies was immediately suspected. And sure enough, a second wire came saying: "Inform Pan Africa Conference Nyasaland official delegate after three days stopped by police."

So only the delegates of Northern Rhodesia were able to be present. The conference was to have studied a 7-point program drafted by Rev. Michael Scott for improvement of African conditions.

Despite the British success in blocking the conference, the Northern Rhodesia African Congress is going to try again. In concluding its report on what happened, the Congress urges: "Whoever you are and wherever you are, if you believe in a world without racial discrimination...we are appealing to you to do anything you can to help us plan a future regional conference."

LITERATURE

Scott of South Africa by Winifred Courtney free
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Chiefs and Citizens of Nyasaland by A. Creech Jones .15
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Back issues of Americans for South African Resistance .05
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