

Fallen Among Wolves

- Joe Congo

A minute of silence. Silence descends, whispering silence. Heads bowed, eyes closed and hats in hand. Caps off to martyrdom! All hail Afrikaanerdom! A hero has died. As the flag draped coffin is lowered all present take an oath that you never died in vain. He was God's child and an ardent Christian, he died during weapon cleaning, the priest has just said. Present at this funeral is the family and the closest of the next-of-kin. There is no glamour of ceremony here, no brass band to sing "Die Stem van Suid Afrika".

All this is done in the names of security, in the name of bullet-proof Boer soldiers, in the name of those that wield a magic wand against Umkhonto, those that never die. These secret heroes. Our country should not know that "our boys on the border" are made of flesh, muscle and red blood. That they bleed and die under cannon of sizzling and liberating bullet and shrapnel of freedom.

Boer soldier, you are a young man in your late teens. You are beaming with full life from ear to mouth. You have been brought up well-fed, well-clothed and under mother's tender care. Today you are a man old enough and groomed enough to stand on your mother's kitchen table and scream "ANC is terrorism! Soviet threat! Cuban presence in Angola!" This is your parrot politics and you think you are a politician. For the time being you seem to have forgotten that your teacher once said: "Leave politics to politicians". You are bravely making an entry into this vicious and merciless world of politics that left your white-haired Verwoerd a Tsafendas gift of gaping wounds and your next to demi-god Vorster landing bare-bottomed on a seat of ferment.

I may not know your name but I would not mistake you in a crowd. Your stare, language and thinking logic relate volumes. You seem to be possessed of anger seeming to be naturally inbuilt. At sight an African fogs your mind and tenses your muscle. With an African you cannot smile, your laughter is colour defined and expensive, at best you can afford a hangman's grin. You have been sentimentally stirred to a point beyond which there seems to be a margin of no return.

This is no time for me to put the record straight, you know your record. "You crouch over your rifle and it is your finger that caresses the trigger" in Sharpeville to Carl-



Young conscripts in training. Tomorrow's casualties?

DEATH

Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss
We regret to inform you that your son/brother/
husband, was killed/missing in action
on the 19... . He fought bravely and

WRITES

tonville. You are the shrills and tears of Soweto and Langa. Without batting an eyelash you tear limb and body apart. You stare death in the face thirsty for a dust soaked young and promising brain. In hawk fashion you prowl over Mahlangu's grave even when he is no more. With all honour and dignity you relate your saracen exploits to your mother, wife and children. You seem to be racing with madness itself and yet, perhaps stupidly, I still want to believe that you are still human. Human enough to have a biologically functioning b r a i n and fully aware of the grave crime you are committing with a yellow callous smile.

While your money-saturated bosses enjoy the last drops of a shrinking paradise you march and trounce Cunene Province, you create human ash in Nyazonia, you erase smiles in Kassinga. "Hands Off Angola!" We say. "Hands On Angola!" You reply. You reduce summer, spring and autumn into one meaningless passage of time by summaing hell unto earth. You are the one that breakfasts on the Zambesi and dines across the Equator. "Hot pursuit" is your greeting passport into free, harmless

and friendly Africa. Invasion of foreign lands has become your stock-in-trade, simple as boarding a tourist bus. But this time you are the fare and your Almighty Pretoria the benefactor.

Time is fast approaching when the Northward Limpopo bound train for border duty shall be your terror and nightmare. At the railway station your "Papa" and "Mama" shall bid you farewell and your return shall be a ghostly knock on the front door, the entry of an unknown man, a consoling note reading: "He died with honour and glory for the fatherland". "Papa" and "Mama" shall stare each other in the eye and their numb gaze shall converge on your younger ten year old brother whose path is also that of "glory for the fatherland". This is your path as the fish of the race-mad muddy waters, I want to breathe the life into you but you have been drained dry and exhaled of the love for life and man.

Mr. Soldier, if I may address you so, the decision is yours, judgement has not yet been pronounced. We reserve the right to final judgement. Yours is a marathon trial. Rustenburg, Moroka and Booyens are the people's trialstones surging uninterruptedly forward under the ever present reminding trial venues and echoes of Amalinde, Thaba Bosiu and mighty Isandlwana.

In battlegrounds as far apart as Blood River and Wankie we buried soldiers. We are dynamite itself exploding with freedom and grinding you alive. Rightly placed, you are an accident and scurvy of history, and your body and soul belong to the manure fields of posterity.

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campaigns to save the lives of our comrades. To our oppressed but fighting people, the message is to carry on in the spirit of the successful battles of the Year of the Freedom Charter and the South African Worker, to engage the enemy in all fronts. to harass him, disperse his forces and weaken them. In brief, to deny him peace.

FORWARD TO A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT!