

Dungeons Dark

- JOE CONGO

We are now running the final paces of the 20th Century, a century which "if our future generations do not judge us too severely" has made gigantic inroads and achievements having no parallel in history. But, perhaps, future generations shall have every right to judge us severely and harshly when history tells them that once there was a land which for over three solid centuries was a den of terror squads. A century that could at will let loose its terror machine as a people's daily bread in full view of the world. A country that stubbornly defied all protests pouring in in all languages of the world, including its very own. A country that sought to reduce such august bodies as the UN and OAU into a toothless pittance. They shall be told that that country was the Republic of South Africa. How could such a ruling clique be given, not only the moral, but downright physical right to exist and breathe? Perhaps the names of Carter, Schmidt, Thatcher shall recur on the lips of those privileged to explain, in a similar way as the names of Goebbels, Mussolini frequent those explaining now. It is hard now to tell what they shall believe, doubt or reject.

OPEN TERROR

It is true, South Africa practices open terror for us to feel and the world to see. And if the racists can be given any concessions we can say that they do not hide their sadistic defence of usurped wealth and land. But then there is the other world of keys, locks, warders and cells where the thick skinned wrath of race supremacy operates full blast upon, not only the patriots of our country, 'victims of agitators', but on 'communists' and 'agitators' proper. In these corridors courage is pitted against anger, unyielding determination against arrogance, Isandlwana against hell with a tremendous collision of fury.

If walls could nod in approval, these concrete walls would be first witnesses to our Nuremberg. There's no rumb-ling of tanks, bullets don't graze on man and no grenades explode. What explodes is complete silence for the outsider except for the occasional scream that escapes the sound proof walls. Down to earth instruments are used as protruding knuckles flay lips and teeth, boots target themselves at will,

sputum squeezed through soiled teeth is buttressed against the neck and face. Professional fascists commanding psychological prowess empty their academies with limitless hate on simple but formidable courage.

In these cells even a fading flower forces a smile relieving the nostrils from a stench choked still air invading this sardined confinement from the bucket at the corner. Memory fades losing track of time, March or April, day or night, under the naked bulb that burns without lapse or let up. What remains indelibly unforgotten is the number of steps from this corner to that one, how sharp the corner edges are, the number and size of cracks on the floor, the type of handle on the door, these are gone over with hourly frequency for lack of mental exercise. The walls draw closer each day commanding "Talk", "Why resist longer?" Courage is sandwiched as time crawls towards an endless abyss. The silence comes down in a material wave, which for lack of space pins the lone figure against the wall marshalling him to scream so that at least there be sound.

WALLS STAND WITNESS

These walls stand witness to all profession both humane and inhumane, even the medical professions (that gives life) is tamed anew, the Hippocratic Oath becomes slippery, microscopes malfunction to give good autopsy reports: "He hanged himself", "Thrombosis was cause of death", "Natural causes", "Slip in the shower". Humanity's highest achievements are harnessed for but one goal - to squeeze and dehydrate truth with hairsplitting sadism till the last twitch of a finger. "Haak Vrystaat" torture chambers scale tissue after tissue, sensory organ after another to electrocute a conviction to smithereens. Lust having gone its length, the victim is carried on a stretcher to his solitary hole, a pause before it starts all over again.

When the human being has become human flesh the 'agitator' is set free. Mother and child outrun each other in a bid for the first to be embraced. A grin is what can be afforded from the corner of healing lips, and that is all. The child relates with incessant noise on how anxiety had gripped home, how mother had spent sleepless nights, how mother's eyes had swollen red with dark blotches, how relatives had come to soothe their loneliness, to be rewarded with father's nod of approval. Perhaps time will heal his fading eyesight and slow encroaching deafness. But what cannot heal is mother's dawning belief that she will never ever again breast-feed another daughter or son. The knuckle has flayed and

the boot has run its course.

F A S C I S M

Genocide! Fascism! Not because we are alarmist, not because we want to give credence to our claim that our struggle has no parallel on the continent, not because we are waging propaganda for lack of something revulsive and mobilising to say, not because we are not victims of the Internal Security Act and are not grazing under the General Law Amendment Act, not because we are not witness to a land of mushrooming tombs and orphans. Not because we are unmindful of what a landless and famine hit 'Bantustanite' has to endure, not because... not because we are ignorant about the total meaning of genocide. We are South Africans, we are the muscle, tissue, strain and stress of our country. Lest webs build on these names: Looksmart Ngudle, James Lenkoe, Mapetla Mohapi, Joseph Mdluli, Lawrence Ndzanga, Monty Motloun, etc., "And who else? Er... What short memory I have."

At the end of the day we shall collect empty cartridges spent in battle, we shall neutralise unexploded minefields, the fragmented railway network shall be restored, oozing oil pipelines shall be patched, gaping bridges shall be put under traffic, some of the injured will be confined to wheelchairs, heroes shall have been carried sky high. The young ones shall enter these cells and touch fingernailed scrawl and engravings on the wall failing to interpret them, failing no matter how much they stretch imagination to grip what 180 days of solitary confinement is. Upon the honour of their names we shall be building a triumphing world. Their stoic faces stand vehemently defiant against any short memory of history.



"ALL MY LIFE, I HAVE SERVED THE FATHERLAND, THE REVOLUTION AND THE PEOPLE WITH ALL MY HEART AND STRENGTH. IF I SHOULD NOW DEPART FROM THIS WORLD, I WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO REGRET, EXCEPT NOT BEING ABLE TO SERVE LONGER AND MORE."

(PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH - MAY 10, 1969).



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