



11 South Africans of all races, brave campaigners against apartheid, are on trial in Pretoria for their lives. Only international action can save them.

5,000 political prisoners already cram the gaols of South Africa's police state.

300 of these are held indefinitely, without charge and incommunicado. 165 will be tried for alleged 'sabotage,' which in South Africa may include striking, slogan-painting, even trespass, and which carries penalties from five years' imprisonment to the death sentence.



Walter Sisulu*

Ex-Secretary-General of the African National Congress, detained indefinitely under the 90-days provision of the 'No Trial' Act.

Sisulu is one of the most respected and experienced of South Africa's leaders. Born in the Transkei in 1912, he joined the A.N.C. in 1940, and became Secretary-General in 1949. He took part in the great Defiance Campaign of 1952, was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act and forced to resign from Congress, accused in the Treason Trial of 1956, and detained for five months during the Emergency of 1960. In 1963 he was sentenced to six years imprisonment for his part in organising the General Strike of May 31, 1961, and for furthering the aims of the banned A.N.C. He went into hiding while out on bail pending appeal, and was leader of the underground at the time of his arrest. During his period of bail he was placed under 24-hour house arrest and prevented from communicating with anyone outside his immediate household. Married with five children.



Lionel 'Rusty' Bernstein*

Architect, and veteran of the Italian campaign in the last war. Born in Johannesburg in 1920, he was interested in politics from his teens, joining first the Labour and then the Communist Party, and in the 'fifties, the Congress of Democrats. He was among those found guilty of assisting the 'illegal' African miners' strike of 1946, later figured in the Treason Trial of 1956, and was detained during the 1960 Emergency. In 1962 he was placed under house arrest, and arrested at Rivonia on July 11th, 1963. Married with four children.



Dennis Brutus

Banned Secretary of the South African Sports Association, which led the fight to break down the rigid colour-bar in South African sport; now in indefinite detention. A journalist and teacher until banned from both professions, he won the Mbari (Nigeria) prize for poetry in 1962. Charged with 'meeting' a journalist while under a ban, he fled South Africa earlier this year to try to reach the International Olympic Committee to demand suspension of the whites-only South African teams; but was recaptured and shot in the stomach by South African police, allegedly while trying to escape. Married with seven children.



Ahmed 'Kathy' Kathrada*

Transvaal Indian Congress leader until he was banned from all political organisations and confined to Johannesburg for five years. Born in 1929, he has worked in the liberation movement since the age of 17, when he helped organise the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign, went to gaol for his part in it, and had to give up his university career. In the treason trial, and detained in 1960, he was placed under 12-hour house arrest in 1962, but went into hiding to continue his work in the liberation struggle. Arrested at Rivonia on July 11th.



Nelson Mandela *

Organiser of the political strike of 1961, and A.N.C. underground leader until his arrest and trial in 1962 for organising an illegal strike and furthering the aims of an illegal organisation. Sentenced to five years imprisonment, he has now been charged with sabotage, together with his 'Rivonia' group.

Mandela became world-famous for his evasion of the police over a period of months, and for his audacious tour of Africa, without a passport and unknown to the South African authorities, in 1962. He is a lawyer, born in 1918 of the Tembu Royal House in the Transkei, who joined the A.N.C. in 1944 and soon became one of its most militant and capable leaders. Married with four children. He was National Volunteer-in-Chief of the Defiance Campaign in 1952, accused in the treason trial of 1956, and detained in the 1960 Emergency.



Govan Mbeki *

A.N.C. leader from the Eastern Cape, arrested in the Rivonia raid and detained indefinitely. Born in the Transkei in 1910, and educated at Fort Hare University College, he worked as a teacher and later as a journalist on the weekly *New Age*. His reports on Pondoland in 1960 and 1961 did much to expose the brutal suppression of the Pondo rebellion under the 'Emergency' that still obtains. In 1962, a charge of sabotage was brought against him, and after he had spent five months in solitary confinement, withdrawn. Married with four children.



Robert Sobukwe

Former President of the Pan-Africanist Congress. A lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, he called for the campaign against the pass laws that led to the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. Sobukwe was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment for his part in organising the campaign, and on the day his sentence expired (there is no remission for political prisoners), he was detained and sent to the concentration camp on Robben Island under a provision of the 'No Trial' Act rushed through Parliament for the occasion, which permits the indefinite detention of political prisoners who have already served their sentences.



Dennis Goldberg *

A civil engineer, formerly an official of the Congress of Democrats. Arrested at Rivonia on July 11th, and now on trial for his life, he has reportedly been held in chains. Born in Cape Town in 1933, he became involved in the anti-apartheid struggle as a student, and lost his job in 1956 and again in 1960 as a result of his political work. He was imprisoned for four months during the 1960 Emergency. Married, with two children.

* Accused in the "Rivonia" trial together with **Ramond Mhlaba**

Elias Motsoalaba

Bob Hepple

Andrew Mlangeni

James Kantor

Declaration

On 11 July this year South African police swooped on a house in Rivonia, a suburb of Johannesburg, and arrested 17 men and women, Africans, Indians and whites. The police and press immediately claimed that the raid had destroyed the underground headquarters of the African National Congress, and subsequent government statements, exciting white racial hysteria, have amounted to little short of contempt of court. The Rivonia accused—with the exception of two men who escaped—have been held in prison ever since, without charge or access to any legal assistance, and it is now understood that they are to be tried, together with other political prisoners, for sabotage. Among them are to be Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela, former office-holders in the banned African National Congress and both popular symbols of resistance to the cruelties of apartheid.

Sabotage, in terms of the 1962 General Laws Amendment Act, covers a large variety of offences, from slogan-painting to strikes. Several of those accused of it have already been sentenced to death, while others, including juveniles, have been sent to prison for the term of their natural lives. Many political prisoners have not even been brought before the courts, but are being held in solitary confinement, under the General Laws Amendment Act of 1963. Some of these have been tortured, and one at least has recently—it has been claimed by the police—hanged himself in his cell.

Sentencing has become a mere formality, for men like Robert Sobukwe, former President of the Pan-Africanist Congress, have been tried, have duly served their sentences, and have then been further detained indefinitely. In political trials, legal safeguards for the accused have been so carefully eroded that the right to a proper defence no longer exists. Those charged with sabotage are now obliged in law to prove their innocence and are presumed to be guilty if they are unable to satisfy the court otherwise.

The men and women arrested in the Rivonia raid, with those joining them in trial, are at the centre of a government attempt to crush all resistance to white supremacy in South Africa. They would not face trial at all in any rational society; they are leaders of a popular struggle for the defeat of racial rule, for the recognition of rights regarded as natural wherever a common humanity is acknowledged. Their struggle is the struggle of all men for freedom; their trial is the trial of all men who want to be free.

Most of them face long—perhaps indefinite—periods in prison. Some—it is understood that the prosecution intends pressing for the penalty—face death by hanging. What happens to them is not their business alone; it is not even merely the business of all South Africans. It is the business of everyone everywhere who believes in the right of human beings to fight for the right to govern themselves. International pressure has before now, as in the treason case of 1956-61, helped men and women put on trial by the South African government for resistance to racial despotism. Without such pressure, it is doubtful if the accused would have been able to defend themselves properly and gain eventual acquittal. Recently, however, the law has been so mutilated as to make of it a parody of justice. International opinion must act again, now, to ensure the release of the accused.

World Campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners

Sponsor: The Anti-Apartheid Movement

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