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STATEMENT ON 90 DAY DETENTION -
THE SYSTEM AND ITS METHODS

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Kauf
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Why all these
instructions if nothing
illegal

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- 1) Interrogation, not detention, is the real reason for the 90 day detention law. When the Police detain a person, they do so because they believe they can get information not only about that person, but also about others. Solitary confinement does two things - it softens you up for questioning, and cuts you off from your family, your colleagues and the Courts. The Security Police have a free hand to extract information from you in any way they wish. Whether they torture you or not, at the time there is no way of protesting. You are alone.
- 2) The police have different styles of interrogation: requests, dogged persuasion, threats, rewards, beatings-up, squeezing testicles, smothering with a plastic bag, electric shocks, etc. They may use any one at once. So far they still discriminate between prisoners in the degree of pressure they exert, using different methods against black and white, men and women, young and old; also varying their techniques on the nature of the charge they are investigating, on the time at their disposal and on the character of the individual policeman himself. To date a pattern of only investigating specific charges on specific information received has emerged; this could change. The Security Police in nearly all cases first tried to find out the personal weaknesses of each detainee. The latter has to rely on himself as an individual as never before; no two individuals respond alike under conditions of stress, nor will the detainee find himself in the same position with each interrogator. It is essential, therefore, that the individual establishes as soon as possible what line of attack is being used and defends himself accordingly. Some detainees who did not assess their capacities and weaknesses were at first bowled off their feet by the 90-day technique, but recovered towards the end - often when in contact with their friends.
- 3) In July and August 1964, the Special Branch interrogated a wave of detainees using a new technique. Batteries of detectives working in shifts, firing salvos of questions, forced detainees to stand in one spot without sleep and without sitting down, until they collapsed and agreed to make statements. This new technique is startlingly effective so far as we know, few who have been through this torture have been able to withstand it. Some stood it for longer than others. Some were able to last out several bouts by one means and another, but finally collapsed. Some gave away next to nothing, repeating to the police what the police had already told them, fabricating stories and concealing a great deal; others, even people who had held out courageously, at the end broke down and gave away everything they knew. Of course, there were some who gave everything without any pressure being exerted.
- 4) These people did not all cave in just because they were weak. Most of them were determined not to say anything under any circumstances; they were frequently people with a long experience of struggle, who expected torture and had prepared themselves for it. They were broken, firstly because they were taken by surprise with a new weapon, but mainly because this weapon is highly sophisticated. This new technique leaves no marks, it is ridiculously simple, yet its effects are amazingly complex. It is probably more devastating than outright brutality.
- 5) But though the technique is new to South Africa, it is not original. The South African political police have learnt the tricks of their trade from police in other countries. In a chapter on the Eliciting of Confessions in *Battle for the Mind* (Heinemann), British psychologist William Sargant quotes a political prisoner who was examined (sitting down) by the same technique - called the 'conveyor' - where the interrogators work in shifts. "Some prisoners had even held out under torture", the man said, "but I only know of one man who held out under the 'conveyor'". The prisoner describes the ordeal: "I can hold out another night, and another night, and possibly another night but what then? What's the good of it? They have all the time in the world. At some point or other I must physically collapse."

eventual collapse - only delay it. The police must be forced to change this method for some other. They must be made actively to appear the beasts they are. The police are often unwilling to adopt this course as they know it can boomerang, making the recipient even more unco-operative. Stubborn refusal to follow their lead displeases them. If the detainee by refusing to stand provokes a beating he is no longer in the position of 'torturing himself'. Physical beating soon leads to unconsciousness where the sense of pain is dulled. Henri Alleg, author of 'La Question', withstood many varieties of physical torture by rejecting all doubts, fears for the future, and feelings of hopelessness from his mind; he determined inside himself not to talk at all costs. He won. Complete non co-operation and losing consciousness will deny to the police the maximum results and minimum effort which is guaranteed by the status torture.

- 2) Exhaustion results in the lessening of your mental and emotional powers of resistance. With the dulling of the thought processes you become highly suggestible; despair, worry, self-pity, doubt and shame take over from the primary resistance attitudes of loyalty, contempt, aloofness and determination. Some detainees found themselves contemplating suicide in the agony of the moment. A strange admiration for the chief interrogator is an indication that the detainee is about to collapse. The prisoner should mentally check his behaviour and reactions (watching for self-pity, irritation, excessive moods, etc.) The mind should be kept active, and objective; it is helpful to develop an antagonism to the actual person of your interrogator.
- 3) Hopelessness is probably the heaviest factor. The thought that sooner or later the detainee must reach a breaking point led many to crack in anticipation. By determining never to give in the detainee can double his resistance; exploit the contradictions between the interrogators, hope they are limited in time, draw out more information from them by exasperating them into indiscretions.
- 4) Several prisoners lost the will to resist when confronted with incriminating evidence against them. Many inexplicably cracked up when confronted only with their code-names. Some detainees after the rigours of solitary longed to be charged. The fact statements made under 90 days could not be used in evidence made it easier for detainees to decide to make statements. It is important for the detainee to realise that the police never know as much as they pretend to. Making a statement confirms their guesses, leads to others, gives the prosecution a clear picture of what has happened. A statement is never really justified unless it is a lie which incriminates no one and exonerates you.
- 5) The police often confront you with seeming evidence of the collapse of a colleague. This is dispiriting, but it does not mean to say he will give evidence. The onus is even more heavily on you not to crack up. Some detainees did in fact write statements in a state of collapse. They told the police everything they knew, far more than the police ever suspected. Some exaggerated the complicity of others, lying about the parts played by others in order apparently, to demonstrate to the police that they were coming clean. If your determination not to speak is broken and you feel you can really lie your way out, you must begin to prepare your statement long before you make it. Write your statement yourself; repeat what the police have told you, without making it obviously so.
- 6) The police realise that much of the effectiveness in treating political prisoners results from the effects of isolation. The detainee is suddenly thrust before eight or more hard, ruthless men and bombarded with questions. He is thrown off balance, and is placed entirely on his own resources. Not only must the detainee establish and defend his weaknesses but he must take continuous and positive efforts to overcome the effects of isolation. The planning and executing of mental exercises, dissecting the police approach and preparing to argue against indoctrination attempts help to keep the mind busy, and lessen the effects of the being 'incommunicado.'

- 6) This report examines the peculiar effectiveness of the 'conveyor' in detail in Part II, and suggests some ways of defeating its various effects as they arise; Part III offers our conclusions and recommendations. This report is written so that future detainees can learn from the experience of past detainees, and know what to expect and how to prepare themselves. That is half the battle won. Equally important, we write this so that people should realise what dangers they face when one of their associates is arrested. We believe that people who have not been grilled through the 'conveyor' do not yet fully understand what a damaging weapon it is. One thing we have found to be true: bravery and determination are the two most important factors in resisting torture, these are not enough. The 'statue' torture is ingenious, and political prisoners are going to have to outwit it.
- 7) Above all, the detainee must remember that he can win. The police cannot hold him indefinitely, whatever their threats; sooner or later all people held under 90 Days must be released or brought into a Court of Law. Even if he has made a statement incriminating others he must at all costs refuse to give evidence. Many of the trials in 1964 would not have taken place but for accomplice evidence. The 12 month sentence for people who refuse is a doubtful threat; if the police know that a detainee will refuse to tell the court about his colleagues, it is very unlikely that they will subpoena him. Political prisoners who have been given long sentences should never lose sight of the fact that 'life-imprisonment' is meaningless in the present political set-up. Fear of a jail sentence grows quickly in the mind of a detainee if he listens to the police and indulges in self-pity and recriminations. The idea of a jail sentence should be irrelevant to the detainee - his is the task of beating the police by refusing to give information. The world is on his side, and can bring real pressure to bear against indefinite detention.

PART II How Torture Works

- 1) When a political prisoner is forced to stand during interrogation, many things can weaken him. Different factors affect people differently but the most important are listed. After describing each influence, we suggest ways of defeating or lessening its effect. It will be seen that in our opinion the only way of beating the conveyor is to avoid it, but we include details of its operation in case the detainee finds himself standing despite himself. The sudden effort courage required to refuse to continue standing is probably less demanding in the end than standing for hours on end.
- There is acute physical pain after the first eight hours. At first it diminishes as you get used to it, and then returns later, insistently. The back, shoulders and neck begin to ache from the strain on the spine. Severe headaches may be experienced, seeming to be localised in the eyeballs. The ankles swell after about 30 hours standing, and the soles of the feet begin to sting and ache. Cramp from too little exercise begins in the thighs and calves sooner or later, depending on the fitness of the detainee. If no water is provided, thirst becomes intense. The general effects of physical fatigue are marked by most detainees - faintness, numbness and poor muscle co-ordination. "Red rings whirled before my eyes and my brains no longer functioned. The room began to swim." (Sargant). Pain and extreme indignities are sometimes induced by simple physical assault. Without being made to stand some detainees were beaten up until they admitted what was known about them, or until the police realised they would get nothing out of them. Punching, twisting limbs, and suffocation have all been used. Ultimately, there is no remedy for pain. One can only bear it and suppress it. Exercise keeps the blood circulating and alleviates cramp. In the event of not being allowed to move, keep the legs moving; there is less strain if the body is relaxed. Think of excuses to go to the lavatory, pretend to want to vomit, splash your face with water. Snatch brief periods of rest when your interrogators become tired or inattentive. The worst time for standing is during the night; make sure to demand food and water. These however are all piecemeal remedies; they will help you to prolong your stand but cannot prevent your

- 7) Waiting in jail for interrogation, the detainee becomes emotionally disturbed and softened up. Strongly fluctuating moodiness and the constant strain of jail life easily exhaust the detainee - even if he does nothing all day. In fact, the less exercise and activity, the more easily tired becomes the detainee. Natural extroverts are particularly susceptible to police 'friendliness' - the first step to making a statement. At all time, the police try to induce a sense of futility in the detainee by telling him how everything has been crushed, and everybody has collapsed. It is dangerous not to recognise the very real changes in character that prolonged solitary confinement induces.
- The best way to lessen the effect of solitary detention is to set up a strict routine and to organise your life around your peculiar conditions. Avoid boredom by modelling little figures, drawing up a calendar, making playing cards out of cardboard, doing sums, making a soap-bubble solution out of your soap, building up an insect circus and thinking up new things to do. Keep fit by doing exercises in your cell as well as the exercise yard. Walk 6 miles a day in your cell. Get into contact with other detainees and the outside world as much as possible, but don't send incriminating notes. Don't indulge too much in day-dreaming, a life of mere eating and sleeping, or constant worrying about the future. Try and keep some standard of objective assessment.
- 8) Police try and bewilder you so that you will be over-awed into talking. They present contradictory attitudes - the bully is followed by the comforter. If you are drawn into small talk, you are likely to give small things away, enabling them to surmise the truth fairly accurately. Never react to personal insults and the foul-mouthed racialistic remarks. It helps to analyse the motive, technique and strategy of your interrogators.
- 9) The inquisitors know they are winning when the detainee loses control of his emotions. If they can provoke tears, they know that the long range ability to hold out is sapped. Beware of the seemingly stupid questioner who doggedly repeats one question; this can easily set you off balance. Smokers and drinkers are subjected to 'Pocket-bribes'. The best form of defence is to refuse to be provoked. Take steps to hide your real emotions from the police. Don't let them know which of your colleagues you disagree with, don't respond to flattery or to threats. The decent policeman who poses as your friend is often the most dangerous.
- 10) Some detainees tried to bluff the police by adopting attitudes of seeming compliance. This forces him into a most vulnerable position, since he might just be rationalising to himself a way of making things 'easier'. The 'matiness' stemming from a subconscious fear, or overwhelming desire to communicate with other human beings is well known to the inquisitors, and is easily exploited. Always maintain an attitude of uncompromising antagonism. You can never separate the man from the dirty, repressive role of an SB minion. Remember that it is the sympathetic one who takes the statements.
- 11) The rewards that are offered for information are indemnity from prosecution, release from 90 days, money, an exit permit out of the country, and the offer to release relatives or friends. All offers of rewards should be treated with contempt. Threats are the stock-in-trade of the Security Police. Few detainees have not been threatened without one or the other of physical violence, detention of loved ones, further periods of detention, long jail sentences, other and tougher places of detention. There is nothing you can do about any threat. If you show you are affected, the more effective it becomes. Without showing the slightest hesitation you have to accept for yourself and your family the possibility of any threatened hardship.

12) Up to a point it is useful to regard the interrogation as a sparring match. It helps to keep you alert and gives you time to think. But in the long run any battle of wits is to the advantage of the interrogators because it helps them to size you up, lures you into a position of friendliness, and might even result in a certain amount of indoctrination with their attitudes. Never enliven your interrogators' job for them, the more bored they are, the less they will interrogate you.

Part III - Conclusions

Only exceptionally determined people are able to withstand standing torture. It is better to avoid this system by inviting some other form of interrogation.

When a person has been arrested, his colleagues must assume he will make a statement - about something if not about everything. They should expect the worst and immediately take precautions.

The detainee should refuse to co-operate if forced to stand during interrogation. It is vital that the detainee knows his individual weaknesses before his captors do. He must prepare himself to face a many-faceted attack, and if necessary, submit to physical violence before the standing torture starts its insidious work.

If despite non co-operation the detainee breaks down, then he must start preparing his statement long before he makes it.

He must hold out for at least 18 hours, so that he knows roughly what is known about him. He should write with a clear mind.

Plausible stories must be fabricated to cover gaps; be vague.

If you must name other people, confine yourself to those who are out of the country or dead. Gather tips from people who have been in 90 days. Everyone attached to the Liberation Movement should be actively and intensively trained for the 90 day treatment. The detainee must be ready for anything - new methods of interrogation are constantly being evolved.

FINALLY MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL:- THE DETAINEE MUST AT ALL STAGES REMAIN COMPLETELY DETERMINED NEVER TO GIVE EVIDENCE. FEW IF ANY OF THE PRESENT TRIALS COULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITHOUT EVIDENCE GIVEN BY ONE-TIME POLITICALLY INVOLVED PEOPLE AGAINST THEIR FRIENDS. WHATEVER THE POLICE KNOW OR PRETEND TO KNOW, THEY CAN RARELY MAKE A CASE UNLESS AN ACCOMPLICE IS PREPARED TO TESTIFY. THEREFORE NO DETAINEE MUST BE ALLOWED TO THINK HE IS DOING NO HARM BY TESTIFYING. NOR MUST HE THINK SUCH A REFUSAL WILL LEAD TO INDEFINITE DETENTION.

90 DAYS IS A BATTLE FOR THE MIND. TO COME OUT OF DETENTION HONOURABLY, THE DETAINEE MUST SHOW DETERMINATION AND COURAGE. ANY STATEMENT MADE MUST BE A RUSE TO PREVENT THE POLICE FROM OBTAINING MORE USEFUL INFORMATION: IT MUST NOT BE A SELL-OUT TO SAVE ONE'S OWN SKIN. EVEN IF IN THE AGONY OF THE MOMENT IT SEEMS THE ONLY WAY, REMEMBER THAT NO ONE WHO DOES THIS CAN EVER LIVE WITH HIMSELF AGAIN.

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