

Lum/056/0014/08

(translated from the Haagse Post, a weekly news journal in the Netherlands.)

The trials against the poet Breyten Breytenbach revolved mainly around his connections with the secret ve white ~~organisations~~ resistance organisation Okhela. Breytenbach is imprisoned but Okhela remains active. Wiecher Hulst traced representatives of the movement and spoke to them about the growing trend of apartheid-fascism, about their views on the Boer Republics and over the question of why the black resistance wishes to have nothing to do with ~~Okhela~~ Okhela.

It is now more than ~~thnx~~ two and a half years since the South African poet Breyten Breytenbach was sentenced in Pretoria to nine years imprisonment under the Terrorism Act. Amongst other accusations by the state he was said to have been the initiator of the underground resistance organisation Okhela which has as its goal the overthrow of the racist Vorster regime. In June 1977 Breytenbach again appeared before the courts. This time he was accused for propagating the aims of Okhela from within the prison with the aid of a warder who later appeared to be working for the security police. Breytenbach was then sentenced to a fine of fifty rand for smuggling letters out of the prison. The judge found him not guilty on the charge of attempting to escape.

Since then it has been quiet around Breytenbach. All that was known was that in the beginning of this year he was brought over to the maximum security prison in Pollsmoor, near Cape Town, ~~aprx~~ a prison where there are no politicals, after having spent two years in solitary confinement.

Since then it has also been quiet around Okhela, the organisation said to have been initiated by Breytenbach. ~~Last~~ Last year still Okhela made some exposures and came into the publicity concerning the issue of oil smuggling to the illegal regime of Ian Smith in Rhodesia. But further all appeared quiet, except that a small group of English speaking whites split off from Okhela under the name of SALSCOM (South African Liberation Support Committee)

But Okhela is still very much active and is beginning to profile itself as a resistance organisation of Afrikaners speaking whites which is resisting not only the exploitation of western corporations - supported by the silent collaboration of the western governments - but also against Russian expansion in that part of the world. In the words of Okhela: against the white vulture culture as well as against the red, against Western Imperialism as well as against Russian Imperialism.

...the white government has achieved a serious isolation of white resistance. As the Swiss professor Morand, who was an observer at the first trial for the International Commission of Jurists stated: "the collaboration between progressive thinking whites and the black community appears to have been seriously discredited."

Something else is clear by reading the quoted Okhela document. That is that the members of the group have not allowed themselves to be deterred to make their own specific contribution to the liberation struggle based on their own cultural heritage.

A short while ago I had a few discussions with Okhela members. It was clear that their bitterness against what they see to be the negative attitude of the ANC has increased. Nevertheless they still see the ANC as the leading force of the liberation movement and support its programme unconditionally and the ANC Freedom Charter. They are of the opinion that the ANC devotes too little attention to the national question and as such tows the line too closely of the South African Communist Party which is very Moscow oriented and wants to have nothing to do with independent white resistance groups.

These Okhela members are afraid that with the help of foreign intervention ("Proletarian International") there will be imposed solutions on the liberation movements. Therefore they have decided to continue to work on their own, developing contacts and the underground cell organisation in South Africa. They concentrate on propaganda underground which emphasises the cultural identity of the Afrikaner. Because, they say, the Afrikaner has been alienated from his own anti-imperialist history. In their own words: "We see a resolution within the revolutionary movement develop which in one way or another deals with the white question. There are cultural dimensions amongst whites indigenous to Africa. The language in particular. Afrikaans is not only spoken by the white but also by majority of coloureds. It is the language of the street, a peoples language ..."

Q: It is also the language which brought the black youth of Soweto out on the Streets?

A: Exactly. And herein lies a major contradiction. On the one hand Afrikaans as a people's language, formed and developed in struggle against British Imperialism. But on the other hand the language of the state which fulfills a repressive function. What we are saying is that the language is of the people and belongs to the anti-imperialist tradition amongst the Afrikaners. We are working towards a realization that the state has stolen our language and that it has become firmly integrated in the ideological state apparatus. The state is repressive and alien and defence of our cultural heritage must merge with the national liberation struggle against the state. We make clear that the state is alien to the people."

Q: Okhela sees the South African state as an Afrikaner mask on British Imperialism?

A: Yes. When the Boer Republics were smashed by British Imperialism, it was more than simply a military victory. One dimension of the destruction was the language which the British tried to suppress, and another was the ~~social~~ social structure, the life on the veld and the fanatical ~~spirit~~ spirit of independence with the boer peasantry. With the Boer republics there was no question of pass laws. For this sort of thing the Boer Republics simply lacked the administration. Passlaws, migrant labour, these sorts of things belong fair and square with British Imperialism: the Cape Colony, Natal, the mines, the passlaws, to mention but a few. The ~~last~~ Boer Republic was based on little more than get back stolen cattle and discuss with Paul Kruger in the morning with coffee on his stoep. In essence the republics were anarchist and very much the manifestation of the cultural tradition of the white africa. "

Q: But the Republics no longer exist....

A: "No. They have been destroyed. With the intervention of Smuts the ~~social~~ social structure of the Republics was broken up. Smuts collaborated with the British Imperialists to build up the neo-colonial laager, really nothing more than a classic solution to a colonial situation.

"But the established settler colonial proletariat, white and including the Boers, also had to play its role in the colonial relations. This was a problem initially for the new state. Because in the final analysis this was ~~what~~ what it was all about: to keep these buggers in the mines and break up their bloody republics. Can you imagine South Africa in the 20's and the 30's during the depression? The impoverished white workers became the seedbed for Vorster-fascism who in 1948 succeeded in forming a government within the apartheid-colonial state of British Imperialism. Nothing changed. Apartheid was not introduced; merely, certain aspects of the apartheid-colonial state of British Imperialism were intensified. "

Q: With the goal of strengthening the position of themselves?

~~Indeed~~ A: "Indeed. But the apartheid-colonial state was alien to the Afrikaner people. What happened is that the state got an afrikaner face, but the model and the interests were from Westminster."

In the meantime the apartheid system has been developed still further. It is now precisely the Afrikaners who are seen by the blacks to be the greatest enemy. Also those Okhela members with whom I spoke are fully aware of this. But they now want to work on the contradiction inherent in the fact that the afrikaners have been alienated from their cultural heritage at the expense of their national and their class interests/. Breyten Breytenbach, who is very popular amongst the younger generation becomes a focus in this realisation. This is all the more important as there is an ideological crisis within Afrikanerdom, according to Okhela. Liberal Afrikaners ("verligtes") including Vorster, are striving towards an accommodation of the apartheid system whereby it will be more in line with modern liberal capitalism. Because of this there is a strong counter trend of apartheid-fascism which manifesting itself ever more openly. The most clear manifestation was in November last year ~~when~~ prior to the elections for an all white parliament. A fascist group calling itself the Afrikaner Republican Union murdered Smit, a liberal candidate of the Vorster Party.

Murder.

Smit, according to my informants, was a "leading exponent of the direction in which the national party of Vorster wishes to go": an accommodation of the apartheid system thorough the rapid development of a black middle class which will be prepared to collaborate in maintaining the status quo by abolishing the overt race structures of the state, and liberalising the grand scheme of forming the bantustans, or mini states. "Smit was a leading bureaucrat of the IMF. Now, we all know what the IMF is. The IMF is one face of modern imperialism which regulates the world. It is a manifestation of internationalisation of capital. And then such a Smit appears in South Africa under the banner of the national party in South Africa. If you want one example of a future South African Prime Minister of the Vorster mould, then it is this Smit. And inside the Afrikaner camp it is very clear what is going on.: an accommodation of the apartheid model within the general western vulture culture. And therefore Smit was murdered by the fascists"

" Apartheid-fascism, according to Okhela, is no isolated South African phenomenon. South African fascists collaborate closely with those in Europe and elsewhere. This was once more clear with the murder of Curial, the initiator of the Egyptian Communist Party on the 4th of May this year in Paris. Curial was in close touch with Okhela as an adviser and assisted the organisation in many ways including the provision of ~~fake~~ false passports. ~~Curial~~ Curial has been living in Paris for the last twenty years and had extensive contacts with liberation movements in many parts of the third world. He was murdered by a fascist group called "Delta", an offspring of the Organisation de l'Armee Secrete (OAS).

A little while ago I got to see a manuscript at present circulating within Okhela and which gives a good insight into the ideas within the movement:

"Of strategic importance is the implication of the national front. This has to do with the national question and the building a broad alliance which must be tested and moulded in struggle. It is a particularly acute question given the way in which imperialism laid down the borders of its colonies and for the African national liberation struggle presents a major problem. The way in which Imperialism fixed the borders had nothing to do with the national question, but everything to do with the interests of the tophats of imperialism engulfed in cigar smoke far ~~any~~ away. But what do we see? "Proletarian Internationalism" do today? See what is happening in Angola, or, worse still, what is happening in Ethiopia. Who are now smoking the cigars and where? Where are the politicians who decide to defend the imperial borders of mister Haile Selassie? At the expense of the national question, by putting in the "Proletarian International" troops to crush two national liberation movements, in the Ogaden and in Eritrea.

"And with the South African national liberation struggle we find "Proletarian Internationalism" at present playing the same military games. The national question is taboo. It was solved in Morogoro in 1969 when it was decided that the ANC would become fully integrated, not on the basis of alliances which form themselves in struggle, but by sheer power politics. The ANC thus allows participation of white revolutionaries as individuals, not as groups. And again the result is the working of the "Proletarian International" formula.

"The formation of the National Front is not only the building of military force against the enemy. It is also the unmasking of its ideology. The fact that a very dangerous form of apartheid-fascism is coming to the surface is a sign of ideological crisis within the laager. It is a weakness of the national front politics of the liberation movement that the fascists get the room to grow.

"The Okhela manifesto states that we are profoundly internationalist. We see our international task as safeguarding of what we are ultimately defending, i.e. the national and the class dimensions of our Afrikanerness within the revolutionary movement."

Out of this text it once more becomes clear what was already obvious with the first Breytenbach trial: the white resistance movement in South Africa is isolated. Not only from the white masses (this is in any case obvious), but also progressively from the multiracial liberation movement the ANC. The process of isolation already started before the Breytenbach trials, but was accelerated by these. In part this was no small propaganda achievement for Vorsters National Party and for his security police.

One recalls the first Breytenbach trial when on the first day of his trial he admitted guilt, and a few days later repented "for the stupid things" he had done. And then he also apologised for the poem directed against the Prime Minister Balthasar Vorster entitled Message out of the Alien to Balthasar. In this poem there is the following passage:

" And you, butcher, made responsible for the security of the state/ what do you think about when the night begins to bear her skeletons/ and when the first babbling cry is pressed from the prisoner/ ~~it is a cry of protest~~ etc.... "

Breytenbach's guilty plea and apology came after an interrogation of three months during which he was held in solitary confinement. With this he achieved that the charges against five others were withdrawn - they then appeared as state witnesses - , and that the charges against him were lightened. Breytenbach's friends have pointed out that he did this to protect others and to prevent the onslaught of the security police from being even more devastating than was the case. But in the ANC there was scepticism. "You see, that is what we can expect from our white friends" was the reaction of many blacks.

Even though Breytenbach kept defending and supporting the ANC at both his trials, the same ANC let him drop without a comment. Never has there been any public statement for ~~any reason~~ Breytenbach, and from the very beginning it dissociated from Okhela. In the Okhela Manifesto, written by Breytenbach (which was used as the main item ~~in~~ of evidence against Breytenbach at his trial) it is stated that Okhela was initiated at the request of the ANC. But this has been constantly denied by the ANC.

Buckets full of Dirt.

It will take years before it is finally clear what went on behind the scenes behind the Breytenbach trials. ~~But~~ The second trial has raised questions. Breytenbach came off relatively lightly after the the warder who was supposed to incriminate himself had made a spectacle of himself and was rejected as a valid witness. The impression is that the trial was a set up by the security police to call a halt to the growing popularity of Breytenbach amongst young Afrikaners. After the Afrikaner had heaped buckets full of dirt over Breytenbach they turned 180 degrees after the first trial. At his second trial it was made clear that Breytenbach still adhered to the Okhela ideology and everything had to be done to discredit him. It seems as if this ploy by the security police became too much for the courts to swallow and also for liberal afrikaners who are striving for a liberalisation of the apartheid. Breyten therefore came off relatively lightly and shortly thereafter he was taken out of his solitary confinement.

The Okhela members: " A big danger is the possibility that the struggle in South Africa becomes a race war within the western vulture culture as a whole. Apartheid-fascism is no typical South African phenomenon. It is a facet of the general crisis in the post-colonial capitalist world. Also the neo-fascist movement in France, for example, always is connected in one way or another with the colonial past. What are the activities who shot down Curial? They focus particularly on migrant workers from the ex-colonies, and the coloured population in general. The biggest ally is apartheid-fascists, and their most important slogans are: defence of the western civilisation, defence of apartheid and anti-communism. Just like we always were ready to be a link between the liberation movements in the third world and the progressive movements in the west, so now the European fascists are using the Apartheid-Colonial state for the legitimisation of the white man's privilege.

"The South African situation is going to explode. But it is much more than simply how this explosion is going to be regulated in South Africa. No, it is to have a full impact in its international ramifications. Just think, what is going to happen when soon large numbers of immigrants from white South Africa ~~become~~ becomes large scale? This will become an enormous seedbed for the struggle against the liberation movements and for anti-communism. Then internationalisation of fascism is an enormous problem, especially for us white south Africans who are concerned about South Africa and what is happening in the world. "

Q: The possibility that your ideas are going to have an impact within the whites in South Africa is small, not so? Especially now that you have been almost completely isolated from the ANC.

A: "Yes, but we will continue. We don't need Vorster's permission, we don't need the ANC's permission, we need nobody's permission. This is what Curial taught us, he used to say: you don't need anybody's permission to fight imperialism.

"Amongst the young Afrikaners there is an increasing interest for our own language and our culture. Ultimately, who are we? There is a real identity crisis. And, for the state, this was the problem around Breytenbach, and that is they have done everything possible to discredit and to isolate him. "

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