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#### TORTURED CHILDREN

(The following report has had to be rewritten.  
Detailed allegations of torture  
and mishandling by police - as told by  
children at the international conference  
on "Children, Repression and the Lay in  
Apartheid South Africa" - had to be omitted  
from this report on the advice of our  
lawyers.)

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-Evidence of alleged torture of children in South Africa shocked participants at an international conference on "Children, Repression and the Law in Apartheid South Africa" held in Harare, Zimbabwe, last week. , ' 1

Professor Don Foster of the University of Cape Town's psychology department alleged Pretoria was using torture to destroy opposition and perpetuate apartheid.

"Brutality had taken a new form in the 1960s and in the last 25 years torture has become a systematic part of the South African scenario," Ziana, the semi-official news agency, quoted Professor Foster.

Former general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, Dr Beyers Naude, said the "frightening revelation" at the Harare conference should convince the world that a more determined and concerted action against apartheid was desperately needed. ' ' ,

" Law and Order Minister Adrian Vlok said the government was aware of the conference. Delegates from SA would try to create the impression that thousands of children were being held under terrible conditions and tortured. 1

Torture and abuse allegations invariably proved to be totally false or grossly neglected, according to Mr Vlok.

On September 23 he said there were 115 children under 17 - three 15-year-olds, 18 sixteen-year-olds and 84 seventeen year-olds - being held "under serious charges". He said no child under the age of 15 was being held 'under emergency regulations. Mr Vlok failed to reveal how many 18-year-olds were in detention, although under common law 15-year-olds are also regarded as children or minors.

POLICE USE "SOPHISTICATED METHODS"

Police are using sophisticated torture methods that leave no marks on the body, Mrs Helen Suzman (PFP) alleged in Parliament recently. ' ,

Parliament is one of the few remaining forums where information on the conduct of the security forces may be legally aired.

Such information may be legally printed in the media theaausei parliamentary proceedings may be freely reported on. 1

Mrs Suzman said the methods included "pulling a bag over a man's head, wetting it, pulling it tight and suffocating him: and then releasing the bag when he is half dead.

"If that does not work, another bag, with electrodes attached to it, is used," Mrs Suzman told Parliament.

' Another PFP member, Mr Peter Soal, read out an affidavit by SACBC secretary general, Fr Smangalis Mkhathshwa, in which he gave an account of brutal and indecent acts perpetrated by people who he claimed interrogated him for at least 30 hours while in state of emergency detention last year. ' ,

Mrs Suzman made the allegations, based on 37 affidavits she had, to persuade the government to appoint an objective commission of enquiry into such allegations. .

Law and Order Minister Adrian Vlok refused to .appoint the commission of enquiry. i . ' ,

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#### GOVERNMENT WANTS TO TALK TO ANC - CLAIM

The SA government has made at least three attempts to establish links with the African National Congress (ANC), the banned liberation movement claims.

The ANC said the first approach was made privately through a SA delegate at the Dakar talks. Then a US academic arrived in Lusaka, where the ANC has its headquarters. The third approach was made by an alleged National Intelligence Service man who made contact with a businessman with ANC links in Botswana.

The ANC interprets the alleged overtures by the SA government as a strategy to sow confusion in its ranks and defeat the sanctions lobby at the forthcoming Commonwealth summit.

From London it is reported that the ANC believes the intention is to create the impression that talks are possible rather than a serious attempt at talks.

Minister of Constitutional Development Mr Chris Heunis quickly denied the government was trying to establish links with the ANC.

#### NEWS IN BRIEF

o The ANC (not overlooking its SA Communist Party members) is no more a Russian organisation than the Ossewa-Brandwag of the '40s (not overlooking its Nazi affinities) was a German organisation, Professor Lourens M du Plessis of the University of Potchefstroom, wrote in "The Suid-Afrikaan".

o A policeman was fined \$2 000 or 500 days for causing the death of a man whom he tied to a tractor and dragged for a distance over farm ground.

o Whites in SA need to be liberated from a long history of racial prejudice and a sense of superiority, NG Kerk moderator Professor Johan Heyns told the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

o Seven white Kinross mine employees will face charges of culpable homicide in the Witbank Regional Court on October 5. The Kinross mine disaster, which caused the death of 177 miners in an underground fire last September, made newspaper and TV headlines internationally.

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info in- depth

POLITICAL STALEMATE ENDING?

THE DEPRESSING political stalemate seemed to be a permanent feature in South Africa until a few weeks ago.

The key to breaking the impasse comes from an unexpected quarter: not the United Democratic Front or other extra-parliamentary anti-apartheid opposition groups; not from the liberal Progressive Federal Party; not from the right-of-government Conservative Party.

It comes from the Labour Party, the majority group in the House of Representatives for so-called coloureds in the country's tricameral Parliament.

(Since South Africa dropped the Westminster system to adopt a new constitution in 1984, Parliament has three chambers - the House of Delegates for Indians, the House of Representatives for so-called coloureds and the House of Assembly for whites. Black South Africans were excluded from sitting in Parliament.)

Until the mid-seventies the Labour Party thrived on confrontational politics. In 1975 the Party participated in the elections of the now-defunct Coloured Representative Council (CRC) ... but on the clear election ticket that if they won, they would force the closure of the CRC. The Labour Party subsequently caused the CRC to collapse. It had been the government's token instrument for granting political expression to the so-called coloured who, however, viewed the institution with derision.

At the end of the seventies, the Reverend Allan Hendrickse, Labour Party leader, allowed himself and his party to be co-opted by State President P W Botha to join in the new tricameral parliamentary system.

The new constitution, however, was roundly rejected by the vast majority of the country's population because blacks were excluded and because the three separate chambers - based on racial separation - were seen to entrench apartheid.

Indian and so-called coloured "unknowns" took their seats in their little "parliaments" although - overall - there was an embarrassingly meagre turn-out at polling booths.

The Labour Party occupied 76 of the 80 seats in the House of Representatives. Party leader Mr Hendrickse was appointed Chairman of the Minister's Council and as a cabinet minister (without portfolio, mind you) by Mr Botha. Mr Hendrickse tried to justify his co-optation by saying he had become part of the system to see whether he could in five years dismantle apartheid from within.

Mr Hendrickse in the House of Representatives and Mr Amichand Rajbansi in the House of Delegates became Mr Botha's junior allies and nominal coalition partners. But the two junior Houses, though physically closed to the seat of power, were far indeed from working its levers.

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Until a few weeks ago.

Mr Hendrickse and the State President last month saw their political marriage of convenience break down acrimoniously.

On August 19 Mr Botha gave the House of Representatives a stormy and finger-wagging dressing down during his budget vote debate.

The House had criticised apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act (1), the Separate Amenities Act (2) and the Population Registration Act (3).

The Labour Party even before this had expressed differences of opinion with the State President: The confrontation started over the declaration of the state of emergency in June 1986. The Labour Party also supported the Dakar talks between South African Afrikaners and the African National Congress (ANC) - unlike Mr Botha.

The final split between Mr Botha and Mr Hendrickse came after the Labour Party leader decided not to cooperate with a Cabinet decision to extend the life of the House of Assembly, ruled by Mr Botha's National Party.

According to the constitution Mr Botha has to call a white election for the House of Assembly in 1989. However, on August 13 Mr Botha announced the constitution would be amended so that the election would instead be held only in 1992.

It is widely speculated that Mr Botha is afraid of a 1989 election and is trying to "buy time" by wanting an election only in 1992.

The National Party might lose to the ultra-right Conservative Party.

The Conservative Party made spectacular gains in the May 6 white elections to advance from having no seats at all in Parliament to becoming the Official Opposition.

All three chambers must agree on the change in the constitution to allow Mr Botha to go to the country only in 1992. But now the Labour Party has threatened to veto the move. The Labour Party hinted that it might thwart Mr Botha's plans the day after his finger-wagging diatribe. The Labour Party was clearly angry at being treated like children.

On August 24 Mr Botha wrote to Mr Hendrickse that he (Mr Hendrickse) had acted in conflict with the Cabinet decision to extend the life of the House of Assembly a decision he himself had supported. Under these circumstances his membership of the Cabinet was unacceptable. -

Mr Hendrickse later that day replied: "It is obvious that you are not prepared or willing to acknowledge the feelings and perceptions of others if that perception is not in line with either that of yourself or your party. I therefore now hereby tender my resignation from the Cabinet".

But Mr Hendrickse's "resignation" alone is not the key to the change in South Africa's political scenario. Subsequent remarks by the Labour Party leader have shown that the tables have been turned on Mr Botha and that he is now at the mercy of his "junior partners".

On September 1 Mr Hendrickse told the State President bluntly that if Mr Botha wanted to get the Labour Party to agree to postpone the white elections until 1992, the government had to repeal the Group Areas Act.

"The bottom line is the repeal of the Group Areas Act. ... I say to Mr Botha, first bring the chocolates," he said at a Port Elizabeth meeting.

He also said jailed ANC leader Mr Nelson Mandela should be freed immediately

And earlier Mr Hendrickse said the Labour Party would not approve the measure to postpone the white elections unless Mr Botha spelt out his reform plans for the next five years.

The Labour Party might also turn away from "consensus politics" on which the tricameral system is supposed to run, and block planned key legislation.

If the white elections are in fact held in 1989 and the Conservative Party makes more gains to either oust or weaken the ruling National Party, this would be a retrogressive step for South Africa. The Conservative Party wants to INCREASE racial separation and white domination.

However, if Mr Botha does not want to risk being forced into a 1989 election, he may be persuaded by the Labour Party to actually take meaningful steps to remove apartheid.

However, one is not very OPTIMISTIC in South Africa. The Labour Party's major demand was for the repeal of the Group Areas Act. However, just last week the President's Council published its recommendations on the Act - with few meaningful changes proposed (see story elsewhere in this issue).

Nevertheless the Botha-Hendrickse row has at least the potential to influence political patterns in South Africa.

Progressive Federal Party constitutional spokesman Professor

Nic Olivier says the Labour Party could destroy the present system. A majority hostile party to the government in one of the three Houses of Parliament could make it unworkable and end the tricameral system, he says in an analysis of the "Potential Problems and Pitfalls" of the tricameral Parliament. The government would then be forced to draft a new constitution. And the hostile party would be able to make decisive contributions to the new draft constitution because a new constitutional Bill would have to be passed by all three Houses.

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1. GROUP AREAS ACT: The Group Areas Act No 36 of 1966 is the underlying cause of much of the racial discrimination in South Africa. Geographical areas are separated for different races. The law - not expressly, but in practice - permits for an unequal distribution of rights. Superior living conditions and facilities for whites are off-limits to people of colour. The Group Areas Act enforces segregation in housing, sport and facilities, employment and schooling. Millions of people have been removed (forced removals) because areas have been proclaimed "white"; people of colour who lived there all their lives are moved "like sacks of potatoes" (to use Archbishop Desmond Tutu's words). The Group Areas Act is under review at present.

2. THE RESERVATION OF SEPARATE AMENITIES ACT, No. 39 of 1953: "allows persons in control of public premises to reserve separate but unequal facilities for different races. Although it does not state the blacks should be discriminated against, in practice it is the facilities for blacks that are inferior or non-existent" (quoted from "Race Discrimination in South Africa", edited by Sheila T van der Horst).

3. THE POPULATION REGISTRATION ACT, No 30 of 1950: obliges everyone in South Africa to be classified according to race - entrenching apartheid.