

What it feels like to be Banned

By A BLACK SASHER

TWO SECURITY BRANCH men came to her house one day, and presented her with a new Banning Order, two pages of it. She had been free for nearly two years, and the previous Ban was very mild in comparison to this one. They left her, but she did not notice their going, she was reading the hateful document, and the words, repeated over and over again, "you may not . . ." gave her a sinking feeling and one of despondency.

She slept little that night, and next morning thought she had better go up to the University and finish off an article she was preparing to do with statistics, and which she had found very interesting. But on the way there she suddenly remembered that "you may not . . ." and realised that she was not able to go to the University campus. Who would then fetch her papers, return the books she had borrowed, and could she perhaps find the same reference books in another library? of course she couldn't. She was to learn that the days of being free and independent were over, from now onwards she would be beholden to others, she would have to rely on their kindness, and goodwill. She could no longer do her work alone, but would continually be asking for help. This was the first door to close, but as the months went by, how many other doors were shut.

The next one to close was that of entry to Athlone, and the African Townships, for she may not enter any of these. It was her god-child's birthday, and the little girl had asked for red shoes, which she bought. But of course she was not allowed to go to the party, someone else had to take the child her red shoes, and explain as well as they could why she could not come herself. What about the school fees for Mary? She was so keen to continue her schooling in Guguletu, could she perhaps meet Mary's mother somewhere, and give her the money promised, where could she meet her, for it would not do for a Security man or a policeman to see her talking to a black face. And old Granny in Nyanga, so eagerly looking forward to a visit and the month's rent paid for her . . . who would do these things for her? It would be easier for a friend to take some magazines to a boarder ill at Rustenburg school, for she may not enter any educational institution either. Nor may she enter a factory area so the tea chest promised to someone packing up her books, would have to be bought by someone else. She went with them to show them the factory, and then waited on the other side of the road while they made her purchase. How silly that seemed, but who could tell who was watching, or who might report her. It was never worth breaking the ban for things like this.

Her old cousin at Muizenberg had a stroke, and how she would have liked to see her, and take her flowers, but Muizenberg was outside the Wynberg-Capetown area, so she could not go there. No more walks on any beaches, no more bathes, fortunately the Mountain to walk on, and this was indeed a treat for her and her dog. These two spent Christmas Day walking together, for she was not allowed to go to the family party. They had a big one, with relatives out from England and Zambia, fourteen adults and seven children. It must have been fun, they gave her a toast she heard, but as she thought of the many other families who had absent ones too, she felt lucky to have the sympathy of her family though she couldn't join them; and the mountain comforted her.

She has, of course, had to resign from all organisations, and she misses the stimulation of meetings. How she would have liked to hear Bobby Kennedy and Robert Birley. Reading their messages was not quite the same. She did read them with interest, but kept nothing like that in the house, which can be searched at any time. Harmless articles, but not safe to keep, they would have been removed if found. And the telephone, too, is tapped, so there is no privacy even in her own home. She used to say to a friend who came to see her, "come and look at my flowers", and there in the garden they could talk. She could see only one at a time, and this was difficult sometimes when more than one came in a car. They were good about waiting there, while only one at a time came inside. Such a pity she could never join her friends in town for a cup of coffee. No parties, no meals with friends out, no meals with friends even at home. She began to lose the art of conversation, she had no small talk and so many subjects were never mentioned. She became more and more of a recluse, and withdrawn.

It was sad not to see her sister off on an exciting trip, but there were others at the ship. She missed seeing Mr. and Mrs. A, on their way to Rhodesia, and only an hour at the docks before catching the train. She is not allowed at the Docks . . .

One of the worst aspects to her of this terrible ban, was the weekly reporting at the Wynberg police station. Every Monday morning for the next five years she had to report at this police station, sign a book to show that she was still there. Rain or shine, holiday or not, this hateful thing had to be done, and she dare not forget. Often the sergeant in charge had no idea why she was there nor what she had to do, and she had to

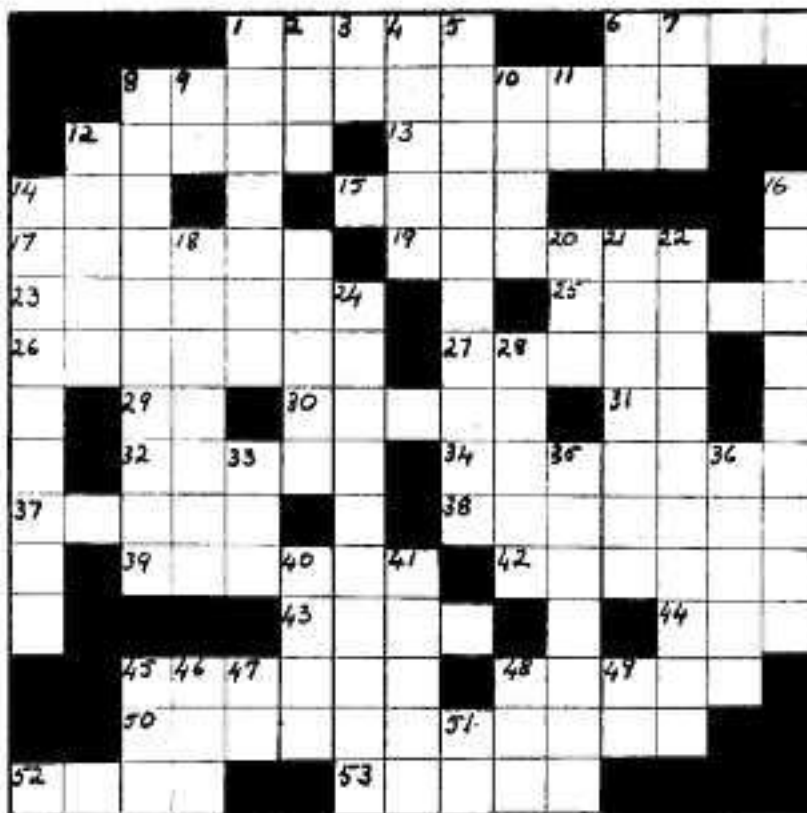
wait in humiliation while he went to find out. She used to go very early before people were up, but whenever she went it was most humiliating and hurtful. The anxiety hangs over her all week in case she forgets.

A banned person may not speak to any other listed or banned person. How was she to know who was listed and banned? Sometimes a name or two would appear in the paper, and one could buy the Government Gazette, and find out that way, but all could not buy papers, and all could not read. It was hard, very hard to pass by friends in the street, with only a sad smile. She began to wonder what was safe, who were her

friends, what was allowed and what was not, what was truth and what just rumour. She began to suspect people, to be afraid of she did not know what. This is no life, movements restricted, hands tied, even thoughts geared in one direction. She must get out, but is there work for her elsewhere? why should she go away? this is her country, and has been for fifty years, these are her friends, her family, her people. Must she leave it all, and be an exile? She has not really done any wrong, and yet is hounded and punished . . .

Yes, she will apply for an exit permit . . . she will leave this country . . .

CROSSWORD — By R.M.J.



Across:

1. Associated with Admiral Evans (5)
6. Wrap (4)
8. Light and shade (11)
12. Fissure (5)
13. This Pa dumps cinders (6)
14. Interjection of Victorian villain (3)
15. Live South African swamp (4)
17. So pour — but it won't hold water (6)
19. A gamble with the Crown (6)
23. Plainer sweetmeat (7)
25. Group with this for segregation (5)
26. Narrated (7)
27. In diagrams a country (5)
29. Closed circuit in South Africa (2)
30. For example — to address a black sheep (2, 3)
31. Not off (2)
32. Tidal wave (5)
34. Draw it with lipstick (3, 4)

37. Such a sight calls for apology (5)
38. South African Railways send out (3, 4)
39. Sign of a sly mob (6)
42. One teaspoonful every four hours (6)
43. Liar bird (4)
44. Definite article (3)
45. So then we tell the truth (6)
48. Scottish dish (5)
50. Under United Nations control (3, 8)
52. Not nuts! (4)
53. There are only two of these (5)

Down:

1. American cookie (7)
2. Batter with a sheep (3)
3. Alternatively (2)
4. Bear with an Australian accent (5)
5. Necessities of life (10)
6. Women's Rural Institute (3)
7. Decay (3)
8. The cast — starch with care! (10)
9. Singular laugh (2)
10. A la Dior (4)
11. Opposition raised (2)
12. Task (5)
14. A lap is par for the valuation (9)
16. The letter after S (3, 3, 3)
18. Oval (7)
20. Did have (3)
21. Golden birds (7)
22. Marinate Ed — and revive him? (10)
24. Fringed watering place (5, 5)
28. Water nymph (5)
33. P.T.? (3)
35. Belonging to the author of "Remembrance of Things Past" (7)
36. Short in Northern Summer (5)
40. Found in macabre dialogue (4)
41. About two pints (5)
45. Came with the Goths (3)
46. Not quite all alone (3)
47. Negative (2)
48. Best of the suit (3)
49. His Excellency (2)
51. Out of — the last one? (2)

● Solution on page 31