

AN IOTA OF DIFFERENCE

MOSES MAKONE

One of those arrested during the recent Southern Rhodesian round-up of African leaders.

ON the night of the 26th February, I was asleep in my house at Mabvuku, 12 miles from Salisbury, when at about 2.30 a.m. I heard a knock at my door. I woke up, switched on the light, went to the door, and unbolted it with my right hand, resting my left hand on the door frame. When I pulled the door back, my left hand was immediately handcuffed and a European policeman entered into the house and proceeded to handcuff my right hand without uttering a word. I was shocked. After a few seconds I asked, "What's wrong"? Two European and three African policemen, who were all in uniform, had by this time now entered my house. They left me standing alone. The two European policemen went into my bedroom, woke up my wife and children, and turned the house upside down in search of books and letters. These they bundled together and threw into a bag.

They then told me to come with them. I was taken to a truck while my wife was asking, "What have you done"? "What is this all about"? I said, "I don't know". My wife was upset and terrified, to say nothing of my children.

The truck then went around and picked up two other people—the Reverend Katsande and Mr. Chikore. We were then taken to a big lorry, around which were four other trucks. These trucks unloaded fifteen people, and we were all thrown into the lorry and driven to the Police Depot in Salisbury.

When we arrived at the Depot, it was still dark. We were taken before a group of plain-clothes men who sorted us into groups of "Stars". Some were told that they were "One Star" men, others Three or Four and so on. I was almost the last to be classified in this way, because the police officer several times called for Savanhu Makoni and no one responded to this name. I was asked what my name was, and I told them that I was Moses Makone. I was then told that I was a "Two Star" man and sent to this group. The seven groups were put in separate open-air enclosures. Here the handcuffs were removed. We remained standing around until daylight came and one saw where one was and with whom. We still did not know what it was all about and nobody told us anything. We then

began to tell each other how we had been arrested.

Abel Dube said that he had been told that he was being arrested because he was a Congress man. This was the first time I realised I had become a political prisoner.

We remained in the Depot until 12 noon, when we were handcuffed again, now in twos with the other hand handcuffed to a bar in a lorry, and taken to Kentucky Gaol near Salisbury. On arriving there we were thrown into four cells, fifty to each. Each cell was about 21 feet by 6 feet.

About 3 p.m. we were given our first meal—very rough mealie-meal porridge and beans—served in enamel and tin plates. We were also given three blankets each—no beds, no mats, no pillows or sheets. None of us had any pyjamas or change of clothes. We just lay on the cold cement floors, but found it difficult to sleep.

The following morning members of the C.I.D. came and pitched their tents in the prison. The next day they began interrogating us. Again it was quite some time before I could be questioned because the name they called was Savanhu Makoni. I did not answer to that name. They ultimately asked me what my name was and then interrogated me. I told them that I had never been a member of Congress, but had been Chairman of the Mabvuku branch of Mr. R. S. Garfield Todd's former United Rhodesia Party. They asked me all sorts of things—virtually my life history—and whether my wife was a politician or not.

Our first difficulty was that of not having sufficient fresh air and exercise. We were allowed only 30 minutes in the morning and afternoon in the open air. The rest of the time we spent locked up in the cells. This led to several complaints being lodged to the authorities, until three of our spokesmen were removed from the prison and sent to Khami Prison. The bad food of the prison, overcrowding, and stale air began to tell on the health of the men. Several of them fell sick. I also fell sick and informed the authorities. They thought I was putting on a show and were preparing to send me to Khami. Medical examination, however, showed that I was really sick.

At this time my friends had made representations on my behalf to Sir Edgar Whitehead, the Prime Minister. They successfully showed that I had been wrongly imprisoned and that I had never been a member of the African National Congress. I was finally released after spending 38 days in prison.