

## 2.

# DEATH FOR TREASON

In the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg on November 15th, 1979, James Mange was condemned to death for treason. The last person to receive such a sentence was Robey Leibbrandt in 1943.

We are totally opposed to the death penalty, not only because it is barbaric and irreversible, but also because it is largely ineffective in the only area in which a moral case might be argued for it — as a deterrent.

We oppose it particularly in the case of a crime committed or contemplated not for personal gain but for reasons of personal political conviction.

Most ordinary crimes which carry the death penalty have in them an element of hot-bloodedness, but even the most cold-blooded hardly rivals the grisly ritual which ends in a man being hanged by the neck until he is dead.

How much worse that a political offender should end up this way even than that an ordinary criminal should. For to execute a political opponent is almost totally counter-productive. In Rhodesia it has not helped save Mr Smith from the capitulation in which he is now involved. If anything his executions gave his opponents the martyrs they needed to strengthen their resolve. And so it could be here.

The execution of Jopie Fourie in 1914 gave Afrikaner nationalism one of its heroes. Smuts learned from that and, when it came to Robey Leibbrandt, he commuted the sentence.

We hope that the Nationalists have learned from this sensible precedent and that, if James Mange is unsuccessful in his appeal, his sentence too will be commuted. □

# PIETERMARITZBURG TREASON TRIAL

The rain comes steadily down.  
Mauve jacaranda blossoms  
cover the pavements and the sides of streets,  
giving the whole scene  
an incongruous sweetness.  
Beside the courthouse,  
alongside the many parked vans and cars,  
blue-clothed policemen stand quietly,  
many of them holding rifles,  
guns that look easy to fire.

Inside the small court  
filled with relatives and sympathizers,  
the accused men listen  
gloomily yet defiantly  
to the judge's solemn words:  
their culpability  
is clearly established.

It is all quite clear.  
It is all legal:  
there can be no dispute.

And now it is over.  
The men judged guilty are driven  
over the jacaranda flowers  
away to their punishment,  
one to the darkness of death,  
the remainder to the twilight  
of lifetimes in prison.  
The rain continues steadily.

From this event, partly, there will emerge  
the future,  
in all its well-sculpted  
and no doubt excellently-documented  
confusion.

Vortex