

Radio Moscow Interviews South African Author

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[Text] The 8th of May is a day for commemoration. Thirteen years ago the prominent South African revolutionary and communist Bram Fischer died. He died after 10 years of imprisonment, remaining true to his convictions until his death. Not only freedom fighters, but all honest South Africans, black and white, are proud of Bram Fischer. Here is well-known South African writer Andre Brink's opinion of Bram Fischer:

[Begin Brink recording] One of the landmarks in my personal development, and in my development as an Afrikaner, was the remarkable Bram Fischer, possibly best known in South Africa as the descendant of one of the most exemplary and illustrious Boer families of the old Free State Republic, later known as an advocate, and ultimately, through a sustained propaganda campaign of slander and distortion, known in South Africa only as communist.

I became acquainted with the image of Bram Fischer during the course of the 1960's. He was a person who integrated me, because of his extraordinary integrity, by deciding to return to South Africa and accepting full responsibility for his inspired struggle against inhumanity, against apartheid, even knowing that he faced imprisonment, or maybe the death sentence, when he could have just gone to England and stayed there.

But at that time, in those years, I was unaware of specifics about him. It only happened later that I read his really remarkable statement to the court, a document that had been for many years completely inaccessible in South Africa. It went so far beyond the level and the distorted image of Fischer projected by the authorities in South Africa that I was moved on a human level and as a writer, I decided something had to be done to disseminate this image, to ensure that more people knew about it.

For this reason, I used Fischer as the model for the positive Afrikaner in my novel, *Gerugte Van Reen* ["Rumors of Rain"], in which I quoted verbatim virtually the entire document, something which could have earned me a prison sentence of 5 years or more had it been a documentary publication. But by using the novel as a form, it was possible to promote this image of Fischer. This was made very clear by my use of Bram Fischer's initials in the name of the character, Bernard Franken.

When you speak to people who were locked up with him, with people who were involved in the struggle with him, you will find that he was not first and foremost a communist, although he was a committed communist, but a human among humans. He was concerned over injustice, over the necessity to acknowledge and honor other people. He was a person prepared to give up his whole life for the sake of others in South Africa to whom human dignity is denied. Whatever one's political convictions may be, even the most inured Nationalist has to respect someone who would to this extend and in this way risk his own life.

What strikes one, of course, is that he is not the only one. He may be one of the most remarkable dissident Afrikaners of this century, but there are more. It is a tradition that really is very old in Afrikanerdom. One could almost say that ever since there have been Afrikaners, there have been dissidents. It was probably expressed the first time, albeit often exaggerated, in an incident when the young Hendrik Biebol, in the struggle against Willem Adriaan van der Stel around 1706, declared for the first time that he was an Afrikaner—and that within the context of so-called legitimate authority exceeding its own legitimacy.

Since then, whether in the liberal direction of (?Ansie) Stockenström or in the backvelder, hellicose direction of Frederik Buzuidenhout or Conraad de Buys—great dissenters who ultimately represented the best in the Afrikaner—it was something which continued through the ages and reached its peak in a person like Bram Fischer. [end recording]

This was part of an interview with the well-known South African writer, Andre Brink, in which he spoke of the revolutionary, Bram Fischer.