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UFR Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université Gaston Berger,

BP 234 Saint Louis, Sénégal

Tel +221 77 718 51 35 / +221 77 408 87 82

E-mail : babacar.dieng@ugb.edu.sn / khadidiatou.diallo@ugb.edu.sn

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Remembering Alex La Guma's Polemics: Resilience and Expectations in The "Rainbow" Nation

Kouadio Lambert N'GUESSAN

Enseignant-chercheur

Université Alassane Ouattara, Côte d'Ivoire

Abstract

The legacy of apartheid is reflected in issues such as human rights deprivation and trivialisation, restrictions and limitations non-Whites experienced over a half-century in South Africa. Under apartheid, the separation of social welfare resources led to unequal allocation of resources based on race. Apartheid policies that led to insufficient investment in physical and human capital contributed to South Africa's poor growth performance during segregation. Based on Alex La Guma's polemical literature, the current analysis revolves around the implementation and maintenance of a system of legalised racial segregation in which Blacks are deprived of political and civil rights. Under the prism of sociocriticism, the present study aims to show that apartheid has been a very dark and frightening time for the country, if not for the whole human race.

Keywords: apartheid, non-Whites, polemical literature, rights, restrictions, sociocriticism

Résumé

Les séquelles de l'apartheid se reflètent dans des problèmes tels que la privation et la banalisation des droits humains, les restrictions et les limitations des personnes de couleur pendant plus d'un demi-siècle en Afrique du Sud. Sous l'apartheid, la séparation des ressources de bien-être a conduit à une redistribution inégale des richesses en fonction de la couleur de peau. La politique d'apartheid qui a conduit à un insuffisant investissement dans le capital physique et humain a contribué aux faibles performances de croissance de l'Afrique du Sud pendant la ségrégation. Basée sur la littérature polémique d'Alex La Guma, l'analyse s'articule autour de la mise en œuvre et du maintien d'un système de ségrégation raciale légitimée dans lequel les Noirs sont privés de droits politiques et civils. Sous le prisme de la

sociocritique, la présente étude vise à montrer que l'apartheid a été une époque très sombre et effrayante pour le pays, sinon pour l'ensemble de la race humaine.

Mots-clés: apartheid, personnes de couleur, littérature polémique, droits, restrictions, sociocritique

Introduction

Polemical literature¹ in South Africa has a long history. One of the prominent writers who is active in the area, Alex La Guma, wrote polemical works to shape a collective consciousness against economic, political, and racial discrimination. This study revolves around *A Walk in the Night* (1962) and *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972) from a counter-hegemonic reading. La Guma's combat fiction contributes to shaping the consciousness of Blacks and Coloureds against racial deprivation. In other words, La Guma's literature of combat attempts to support a specific position by forthright claims while strongly attacking apartheid and defending Blacks and Coloureds' dignity. This form of literary representation highlights La Guma's political leftist orientation fictionalised in the direction of combat.

This work is a social and political investigation into La Guma's complex universe under racial laws and policies. How does La Guma's polemics draw on radical political literature to address directly the various crises that have plagued the "rainbow" nation and capitalism in the past decades? Does the author attempt to foretell radical critiques of alternative visions owing to the evils of apartheid? To what extent La Guma's polemics can be a bridge between the past and the contemporary South African financial, political, social and environmental crises? Through a socio-analysis method, the discussion focuses on texts content to show Apartheid functions in a state of upheaval, turmoil and constant change in the course of history in which

¹ This may be properly called a literature of combat, in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. It is a literature of combat, because it molds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space.

economic and political conditions determine social conditions. The assessment of the hidden dimension of racial crises in African polemical literature takes into account sociocriticism to decipher social adversities and the root causes of hateful principles infringing human freedom.

The current study revolves around the remembrance of Apartheid ills that divided the ‘rainbow’ nation into the privileged and the unprivileged South Africans. The reflexion delves into La Guma’s contention that social outburst originates in massive demonstrations and severe riots on account of legal restriction and human rights violation. Eventually, the study explores Blacks’ need for collective resistance and resilience to white hegemony and oligarchy in the face of an inordinately hostile world.

1. Looking Back at Apartheid’s Harshness

The militarisation of apartheid in South Africa increased as resistance to apartheid grew at home and liberation movements sprung up in other African countries. Full democratic rights with direct say in the affairs of the government are the inalienable right of every South African – a right which must be realised now if South Africa is to be saved from social chaos and tyranny and from the evils arising out of the existing denial of the franchise of vast masses of the population on the grounds of race and colour. In his book *Apartheid and African Liberation: The Grief and the Hope*, Patrick Wilmot clarifies that ‘‘Apartheid signifies many things to many people, to some, an object of blind outrage, to others a system of economic exploitation, to some – a system of racial segregation, to others a political organisation of a European minority to deny the liberty, rights and dignity of the African majority’’ (Wilmot p.xi).

Apartheid is a bleak manifestation of the colonial movement that can be comprehended through discrimination, alienation, exploitation, and cultural violence, regardless of how it is viewed. In this connection, some critics bitterly remark, if not, warn that ‘‘If you are not born in South Africa, you never forget you are black. Nobody ever lets you forget you are black. You have all the pressure on you day after day. You are harassed’’ (Mphahlele et

al. 16). The struggle which the national organisations of the non-European people conduct is not directed against any race or national group. It is against the unjust laws which keep in perpetual subjection and misery vast sections of the population. It is for the creation of conditions which will restore human dignity, equality and freedom to every South African. Actually, La Guma's literary creation includes South Africa's liberation from oppression of apartheid, freedom of speech and quest for identity. And given that literature for liberation bears witness to black people's struggle for freedom, equality and dignity, the polemical writer awakens his people who are manhandled and murdered by Whites under apartheid regime.

La Guma's chronicle of coloured community of the Cape Flats at the outskirts of Cape Town in District Six is a severe condemnation of the apartheid government, not just for the brutal nightly raids, but also for the depiction it creates of socio-economic conditions and human deprivation during apartheid. In the context of La Guma's polemics, the systemic racial deprivation institutionalised in 1948, with its multiple oppressive ramifications, is perceived in the brutality of apartheid authorities in District Six. In this vein, Bill Nasson describes District Six as follows:

The area had an identity and an imagery rooted in a sense of separateness and social and cultural localism. Its shoestring terraced streets reproduced a richly varied and introverted way of life, marked by interests, traditions and values which powerfully shaped its distinctive popular sociability, culture and politics. In particular, the largely autonomous development of a throbbing popular recreational and cultural life was one of the most striking characteristics of the District Six community (Nasson 285).

District Six's popular leisure culture was founded on the material roots of a community searching for answers to inadequate housing and dismal daily lives. District Six is depicted through La Guma's narrative as a testimony of the institutionalised racism that dominated South Africa during apartheid. Alex La Guma was intimately familiar with District Six because he had lived there and witnessed the violence and brutality of the apartheid state through the military and the police.

As a counter-hegemonic text, *A Walk in the Night* challenges dominant ideological assumptions found in official apartheid discourse. It is the pervasive atmosphere of hopelessness and evil and not the animated and pulsating aspect of District Six which dominates the walk during the night. The feeling of desperation and despondency is given shape through the meaningless hunt by two white policemen for the alleged murderer of Doughty, the old white man inhabiting District Six. The cruel chasing of Willieboy, who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, not only illuminates the whole apartheid machinery of death, but also the unpredictability of apartheid atrocity. For Raalt, the identification of the murderer is completely subjugated to the need for a scapegoat since Raalt never questions the link between the murder and Willieboy; in fact any non-white with a yellow shirt will obviously do. In a different context, Paulo Freire asserts that “[And] the more the oppressors control the oppressed, the more they change them into apparently inanimate ‘things.’ This tendency of the oppressor consciousness to render everything and everyone it encounters inanimate ... unquestionably corresponds with a tendency to sadism” (Freire 35). Despite its strong adherence to realism, La Guma’s artistic focus is on the emerging non-white militant politics. In doing so, La Guma employs retrospections and provocative juxtapositions to manipulate his polemical literature, which is a complex textual manipulation, expressing the integrated connections between the past and present in the struggle and the unexpected contradictions of deadly serious matters such as arrests, removal, torture, murder.

Written in the context of severe repression, La Guma’s *In the Fog of the Seasons’ End*, is devoted to the underground struggle. La Guma’s fiction portrays a political struggle similar to an underground liberation movement. In the narrative, apartheid harshness is exposed through a military emasculation operation, which results in social classes’ revolution. The reader can note that “The movement writhed under the terror, bleeding. It had not been defeated but it had been beaten down. The leaders and the cadres filled the prisons or retreated into exile” (La Guma, *In the Fog* 48). In this context, Cecil Anthony Abrahams contends that La Guma imposes the revolutionary movement on the text, as he says in the interview quoted below:

Well, you are quite right in saying that the novel presents an attitude that we have now protested enough and that we should now fight... But, as I say, trying to convey a picture of South Africa one must also realize that apart from bewailing their fate, there are also people struggling against it, and that the political and revolutionary movement in South Africa was a part of the South African scene and that one way or another people have always been fighting against the situation. The political and revolutionary movement has to appear somewhere in the picture and I hope *In the Fog of the Season's End* is a start. I tried to present the underground struggle against the regime as part of the picture of South Africa (Abrahams, *Memories of Home* 163).

The underground movement becomes more believable as a subject matter in La Guma's novels as a result of his fictional political shift mentioned above. Owing to the political crackdown by the apartheid regime in the 1960s, thousands of Coloureds died in political protests, many gunned down by the police or military. During such states of emergency, a police officer could arrest anyone, most often Blacks, for six months and detain them without a hearing. While in custody, many died as a result of torture by policemen.

The narrative echoes apartheid's daily harshness as illustrated through *A Walk in the Night* during a manhunt. After having purposely shot Willieboy, constable Raalt turns deaf to the dying boy. The screams of Willieboy could be viewed as the height of torture under the apartheid policy. The suffering of Willieboy before his tragic death could be summarised in two steps. Constable Raalt chases Willieboy to the terraces of the buildings; a scene symbolising a hunt, where the hunter is of course Raalt and Willieboy the prey. This hunting game begins when the author describes Raalt as "hunter now stalking". Once his prey is located, he kills Willieboy who "crouched like a fear crazed animal" (La Guma, *A Walk* 86). La Guma writes that, as soon as Raalt shot "They got the doors of the van open and bundled the unconscious boy into the back. In his hurry to get away the driver pushed and thrust him quickly, so that he rolled and flopped on the bed of the van, groaning" (La Guma, *A Walk* 89). From this, the reader could apprehend that the inhuman treatment of black people in South Africa was appalling,

shocking, and even shaking. The dire circumstances of torture experienced by Willieboy are portrayed as follows:

In the back of the van Willieboy had come to with the small jolt the stopping had made. He awoke with the faint smell of petrol and carbon monoxide in his nostrils. It made him retch again and he shook until the retching turned to weeping and cried, the sobs wrenching at him, jerking the pain through his abdomen. He reached down to where the pain was worst and felt the wet stickiness of his clothes and then the bleeding mouth of the wound where the bullet had torn through him, smashing into his insides (La Guma, *A Walk* 91-92).

Raalt thoughtlessness before shooting Willieboy could be seen as psychological violence. The *metallic* hardness of the policemen's movements, dress and appearance conveys their brute force and ruthlessness while the images of coldness – 'frozen faces', 'pink ice' – make them out to be mechanical instruments of oppression. Apartheid harshness resides in the description of appalling and horrible atmosphere in South Africa, which result in the seriousness of racism. In the following passage, the narration reveals an unrecognisable and disfigured community owing to apartheid harshness:

Night *crouched* over the city. The glow of street lamps and electric signs formed a *yellow haze*, giving it a *pale underbelly* that did not reach far enough upwards to absorb the stars that spotted its *purple hide*. Under it the city was a *patchwork of greys, whites and reds threaded with thick ropes of black where the darkness held the scattered pattern together*. Along the sea front the tall shadow of *mast and spars* and cranes towered like *tangled bones of prehistoric monsters* (La Guma, *A Walk* 71, italics mine).

These images communicate ruination as well as apparent signs of apartheid harshness. South Africa, is seen as an outdated, a fallen apart and a 'prehistoric' society. It is seen as an ancient and forsaken city of violence – Sodom and Gomorrah in the twentieth century (Cf. New Jerusalem Bible, Gen 19. 24-28). From this form of personal insistence, the reader can realise South Africa's "emptiness" because the "crushing machine" of the Whites has made its passage to mass destruction. Such images connote an underlying annihilation to depict the South African society. As a whole "[...] the city was

a patchwork of greys, whites and reds threaded with thick ropes where the darkness held the scattered pattern together” (La Guma, *A Walk* 71).

Despite the desire and efforts to comply with restrictions and prohibitions, non-Whites are constantly pursued by the South African police in both white areas and homelands. Another harshness of apartheid is the “pass” (La Guma, *A Walk* 19/44/46) which constitutes the backbone of the restrictions in South Africa. Through remarkable signs and carefully selected terms, La Guma highlights the stakes of the system of separate development which fundamentally focus on restrictions coupled with exploitation:

When African people turn sixteen they are born gain or, even worse, they are accepted into the mysteries of the Devil’s mass, confirmed into blood rites of a servitude as cruel as Caligula, as merciless as Nero. Its bonds are the entangled chains of infinite regulations, its rivets are driven in with rubber stamps, and the scratchy pens in the offices of the Native Commissioners are like branding irons which leave scars for life (La Guma, *In the Fog* 80).

While referring to former Roman emperors, especially Caligula and Nero, La Guma richly and tactfully backgrounds his polemical literature, which unveils apartheid architects’ insanity and cruelty. He evokes the vicissitudes of apartheid that debase non-Whites. The reader can therefore echo the sadism and harshness of the apartheid in addition to Coloureds’ removals and restrictions. The real problem with the restrictions on blacks is, from a social point of view, the indescribable selfishness pushing the white minority to build its privileges to the detriment of the non-white majority. Almost all laws have thwarted their desires and aspirations for freedom of movement. These despicable laws took away their lives and honour, desire and hope.

2. Human Rights Restrictions and Limitations

Should the reader depart from the self-evident truth that the most essential human right is the right to live, he might say that this axiom involves a related law paradigm. Whether it is acceptable or not, the facts valid in a society at an economic, religious or cultural level at a given time bears witness of this

correlation all the same. The advance and reign of apartheid are accommodated by intentionally creating all conditions. The designation of non-Whites as “kaffirs” (La Guma, *In the Fog* 64/80) or “black folk” (A. La Guma, *A Walk* 44/46) results in multiple constraints and restrictions for them. This is why La Guma denounces the practice of apartheid as the partition of South Africa into *two worlds* where contrasts are perceptible: there is what belongs to whites, and what is intended for non-Whites. In this regard, he writes:

There were footbridges across the station, of course but there was no point in using them. He dared not risk using the white footbridge which gave access to another part of the district: a Coloured man had recently been sentenced to twenty pounds or ten days for taking a short cut across a White bridge. Sterner measures would be taken if the practice continued, the magistrate had said (La Guma, *In the Fog* 64).

Beukes attempts to transcend colour bar, estrangement, sentences, and space limitations imposed on non-white community. In essence, apartheid is based on the denigration of Blacks and Coloureds. For instance, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*, Beukes is confronted with anti-white denigration by apartheid, when he attends the circus with his aunt (La Guma 40). He cannot distinguish anything because the actors focus on the white audience who is in another part of the circus. To stand against this imposed, unfair colour bar, Beukes decides to never attend a circus ever again while the removal of the predominantly coloured population from District Six is decisive in starting a rebellion against the apartheid regime. Exclusions of apartheid, space limitations, systematic sentences, and denigration of non-whites arouse a sense of rebellion in Beukes.

Besides, rebellion dates back to a time when Beukes and Elias' resistance movement stemmed from the feeling of racial harassment and restrictions of apartheid. Elias' rural area is so to speak affected by socio-economic deprivation. Indeed, after his father's death in a mining accident, his mother discovers that her pension is restricted to 40 pounds in installments of 2 pounds per month, whereas the widows of white miners get fifteen pounds a month for the rest of their lives (74). When a white administration agent

orders Elias to lower his pants to determine his age, Elias realises that whites “have command of everything now, even the length of time one is entitled to live in this world. If they do not do it with the gun or die hangman’s rope, they can easily write it out on a piece of paper, ending days, years, life, like a magician ...” (128). The text’s portrayal of blacks in this way confirms that whites have the power to control the very essence of Blacks, imposing an annihilation on them while they are alive. The narrator writes “If these things are not followed with care, then into the prison with you or all permits cancelled so that you cease to exist. You will be nothing, nobody, in fact you will be decreeted ...” (82). Considered an exile within South Africa, Beukes fights against coercive relocations of the Blacks and Coloureds. All the same, his role as a freedom fighter challenges epistemological fragmentation, homelessness, and internal borders imposed by the apartheid state.

Almost all the enacted apartheid laws sound like apartness strengthened by *Bantustans* or *homelands*. Each African is assigned a homeland by the government on the basis of their origin. Voting and all other political rights are restricted to the designated homeland. The creation of homelands aimed to force Africans to maintain loyalty to their respective homeland, thereby relinquishing their South African citizenship. As a result, Africans living in these homelands need passports to enter South Africa. Therefore, Blacks really became foreigners in their own country. In reality, non-Whites, even if they happen to be in the so-called *white* South Africa, are deprived of all their rights. In the prologue of *In the Fog of the Seasons’ End*, deprivation is epitomised as to disprove non-Whites’ existence:

You [non-whites] see, you people are not the same as we are...Yet you want to be like the Whites. It’s impossible...You people will never be able to govern anything. But we understand that you must have certain things, rights, so we have arranged for you to have the things you need, under our supervision (La Guma, *In the Fog* 4).

From the above passage, the reader notices that as restrictions are experienced by black people in addition to homeland removals, very few places are provided for them in schools and universities. Whites assert that the presence of a Negro in school is a minor concern, as the narrator pens “We don’t want

any educated Hottentots in our town [...] Neither black Englishmen.” (La Guma, *A Walk* 135). The white leader adds that “A teacher in a school for which we pay. He lives off our sweat, and he had the audacity to be cheeky and uncivilised towards a minister of our church and no hotnot will be cheeky to a white man while I live” (La Guma, *A Walk* 134) and yet deprivation of education causes income poverty, and income poverty causes education deprivation.

In the narrative’s concatenation, La Guma conveys that resistance springs out of economic deprivation and harsh restrictions non-whites experience both in the townships and in the homelands. The author attempts to explain a couple of restrictions that are perceived as colour bar and injustices. For example, the narrator writes that the law states:

“Only Whites” gives only Whites the right to attend beaches and swimming pools. These restrictions are subtly expounded when Joe informs Adonis about the truthfulness of the fact which troubles him once again. Joe says “I hear they’re going to make the beaches so only white people can go there [...] It’s going to get so’s nobody can go nowhere” (La Guma *A Walk* 10).

In this regard, there is a chance that the Whites believe that black skin would stain swimming pools with their blackness, which still “still bears racial stigmata ... in accordance with Europe’s desire ...” (Ngwena 51), i.e. white racial supremacy.

Rather, Saul Dubow clarifies that supremacist ideology required by Europeans could stem from the value and nobility the white man wants to give to himself simply because “... the policy of apartheid should be accepted in the interest of the white and non-white population ... that non-white inhabitants should have the opportunity to develop on their own land ... that full control of all the aspects of governance in white areas would be held in white hands ...” (S. Dubow, 1992, p.216) while “... preserving the purity of Boer blood ... and the function of Whites as a protector of non-white race” (S. Dubow, 1992, p.229). In the words of S. Dubow, apartheid government makes sure that social, economic and political power must stay in the hands of Whites.

From white man's instinctive aversion to black man, a systemic racism is implemented through the expression "White only". At the entrance of cafés, bars, restaurants, swimming pools, cinemas, train stations, hospitals, some schools, and all other public places, privileges are only held by Whites. The expression "White only" is so prevalent that it became a creed that summarise the spirit of racial politics and even the institutions of national oppression.

The style of La Guma is probably influenced by the signs that warn and prevent the Black community to thrive. The words used on the front cover of *A Walk in the Night and Other Stories*, are revealing. Signs of hatred highlight harsh restrictions; these are EUROPEANS ONLY - BANTU - STOP - POLICE - PASS - CAFE - BIER - BEER - BAR - BANTOE BIER. This paratext can lead to various interpretations of La Guma's work. Peter Clarke's caricature provides a straightforward portrayal of racist restrictions in South Africa. Indeed, La Guma does not minimise the content of discriminatory laws which are enacted against all the Black Community. However, La Guma emphasises the Europeanism that stems from the phrase "Whites-only buses" (La Guma, *In the Fog* 164), in order to condemn unjustified restrictions that are imposed on non-Whites.

Monica Wilson and Leonard L. Thompson testify that "The native in our urban areas must be regarded as a 'visitor' who will never be entitled to any political rights or to equal racial with the whites" (Wilson et al. 107). This is arguably figured out by J.J. Venter while pointing the prominent architect of apartheid, Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd "envisaged residential separation and local governments for blacks in white areas; no political power for blacks in white areas (where they will be considered "visitors"), neither for whites in black areas" (Venter 424). In connection with the foregoing, the narrator reveals restrictions imposed upon non-Whites as regards marriage. In *A Walk in the Night*, the author does not expose such criminal ways to put an end to the life of a black who makes love with a white woman. It is that situation the haggard man, Mr Green talks to Michael Adonis in these terms "[...] I read how they hanged up a Negro in the street in America. Whites done it [...] read it in the paper the other day. Some whites took a Negro out in the street and hanged him up. They said he did look properly at some woman" (A. La Guma, *A Walk* 16). If no sexual relationship should exist between Blacks and

Whites, all the more, no birth is allowed fearing that non-white may be considered criminal as he/she is guilty of miscegenation, i.e. abomination. In this regard, Georges W. Shepherd cogently asserts that:

Fear of miscegenation, which often lies at the root of the deepest racial prejudice resulting in a law forbidding marriages and liaisons between Africans and Europeans in 1927. The Nationalists extended this bar to relations between Colored and Whites, by the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 – This law not only prevented any more mixed marriages ; it also multiplied those already existent, bringing disaster to many families (Shepherd 120).

Regarding the above, inter-racial marriage prohibition aims to deal with one possibility, i.e., “to regulate the sexual and reproductive economy of whites and guard against racial contamination, laws prohibiting sexual intercourse and marriage between ‘races’ ...” (Ngwena 181). Whites aim to preserve their whiteness, even the *purity* of their skin. As they turn away from the real reasons for their presence in South Africa, Whites turn into real criminals in order to impose themselves. The rootedness of Whites in South Africa is manifested in their obstinacy to monopolise all the wealth at the expense of blacks. Consequently, many realities are undoubtedly incompatible with the question of race, but prejudice remains fundamentally a reality simply because

The history of South Africa since the beginning of white occupation is the use by whites of political and military power to ensure first a near monopoly of land, and then complete monopoly of skilled, highly-paid jobs ... Race prejudice itself is of course a reality ... It is important to ask why the whites used their political power to exploit the other inhabitants of South Africa (Turner et al. 26-27).

In light of the above passage, La Guma emphasises apartheid’s origins and major ideological basis, which is capitalism. The major characteristics of capitalism are the great profit and accumulation of wealth by private owners of the means of production and exploitation.

Blacks’ improper exploitation goes hand-in-hand with servitude, trivial rights, economic restrictions, and spatial limitations partly in targeted areas.

Seen in this light, Gail. M. Gerhart claims that “The greatest damage that the white man did to the Black man through slavery and segregation was to beat him down so much that millions of Negroes believed that they were nobody” (Gerhart 58).

Another epiphenomenon of restrictions originates in the pass: a kind of passport for blacks who are considered foreigners in the same country. The idea of holding a passport is a blatant violation of non-Whites’ right to freedom of movement in South Africa. The storyteller of *In The Fog of the Seasons’ End* epitomises human rights trivialisation or no freedom for non-Whites who bear the brunt of restrictions in that “One wastes a whole day her’, one of the men said ‘I want to get a paper to go to the city for the funeral of my brother who has joined the ancestors, but to get it I must lose a whole day. What a stupid thing this is? ‘We are governed by a pack of hyenas’, another man said in reply” (La Guma, *In the Fog* 124). All the same, it is quite possible that in South Africa, to be considered a man in the true sense, it is necessary to have a passport. This is not a surprise to Elias. Beyond the astonishment, he is baffled when it is his black colleague, The African Clerk, who transmits the news to him “Well, big boy, so it is time to become a man, is it not? ... Now you will become part of what the white people have done for this land. The big bosses have ordained that only you carry the pass will you be a man” (La Guma, *In the Fog* 125). Once non-Whites become men/women, they have passbooks in order to move from ‘autonomous’ homelands to other *white* areas of South Africa.

The retrospective reading of La Guma’s polemics helps to identify the apartheid harshness that gives rise to restrictions, limitations and trivialisation of human rights. The dialectical analysis of the seeds of apartheid highlights the fact that La Guma’s protagonists are constantly confronted with social contradictions and natural forces. How then does La Guma communicate the collective awareness of non-Whites regarding resistance and resilience?

3. Sensing the Need for Collective Awareness

The polemical literary works of Alex La Guma could be considered foundations of black consciousness struggle, if not the expression of the collective liberation struggle. Throughout La Guma's polemics, he portrays non-Whites predicaments and deadlocks. The committed writer uses the shock effect technique to raise awareness among Africans and, by extension, among his readers. The need for collective awareness includes the ideological and aesthetic function of the literary work. The ideological and aesthetic function of La Guma's polemics aims to deliver a discourse of liberation. In this regard, John Maxwell Coetzee opines that

La Guma's achievement is to present a particularly lucid description of the resultants of white oppression in self destructive black violence and to embody his novels a growing political understanding of the process in the consciousness of a developing protagonist (Coetzee 358).

Thus, it is no surprise that La Guma tries to justify his ideological motivations which are historicised and fictionalised. The enunciation of phrases such as "class consciousness", "political prisoner" "struggle to guerrilla war", "underground resistance", highlights the apartheid malaise that the writer portrays through the literature of resistance itself. Through the concept of literature of resistance, the polemical writer summons all black people to the struggle for national existence. In connection with his literature of resistance against colonialism, La Guma's literary creation lays the foundations for the struggle for national liberation in South Africa. For Anders Breidlid, the concept of resistance is defined as

... reconstituting the fragmented colonial self and subverting the colonial representation of the subaltern and, also, of remapping and redefining colonial world without necessarily insisting on the implacable enmity of Fanon's Manicheism and its location squarely within the liberation struggle. Here the emphasis is more on personal and social reconstruction and multi-faceted types of agency rather than a direct, uncompromising and one-dimensional reaction and opposition and struggle against the oppressor (Breidlid 47).

In keeping with this form of literature, I intend to show that Alex La Guma's polemical literature is a resounding success because of its historical and ideological significance and importance. In this regard, Cecil Anthony Abrahams points out La Guma's own words, i.e., "The novel is matter of recording history or recording situation" (Abrahams, *Alex La Guma* 70). Just like the heroes of Black Nationalism (Martin Delany), Black Power (Stokely Carmichael) or Black Consciousness Movement (Steve Biko), La Guma stands up to colonisation and struggles against fascism in *historical* novels.

The description of the heroes of La Guma is noticed by some critics who trace the progressive development of his works. In the passage below, John Maxwell Coetzee succeeds in summarising this development more concisely:

The theme of La Guma's oeuvre clarifies itself ... the growth of resistance from the aimless revolt of individuals without allies or ideology (anarchy, crime) [in *A Walk in the Night*] to the fraternal revolt of men who understand and combat oppression, psychological and physical. And *A Threefold Cord* reflected the dawn of man's conception of himself as a political creature; in *The Stone Country* the first cracks in the chaotic, defensive individualism of the oppressed appeared and alliances began to sprout; *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* presents both the political conception of man's fate and the fraternal alliance as accomplished facts (Coetzee 356).

Heroism is noticeable in *In the Fog of the Season's End*, with Beukes who invites, galvanises and even harangues his compatriots to go and face apartheid. In doing so, Beukes dispels fear. Therefore, he plans to prepare for the liberation struggle: no matter the risks and dangers that this struggle entails. Exacerbated by the apartheid system directed against his peers, Beukes is determined, like many other non-Whites, to take action. The narrator suggests that Beukes' feeling is externalised by this statement which evokes the desire to defeat the evil:

Haven't slept. Bloody committee meeting. Who says I'm not worried ... We got a strike coming off in a few weeks. Just now the cops will start farting around. You reckon I'm not worried? ... But what's the use of worrying? Nothing will get done that way ... What's the use of worrying? Pack up your troubles and smile, smile, smile (La Guma, *In the Fog* 15).

Through the narrative, the storyteller describes a nightly Defiance Campaign² that involves disobedience. Beukes is the prototype for resilience *par excellence*. Through his commitment, he is disinterested in any other activity except the campaign of disobedience. The storyteller emphasises Beukes' determination to encourage black South Africans to engage in a courageous and fearless opposition, whether peaceful or violent. After completing the task, Beukes formulates a plan of action as follows "First thing is we got to give them some work to do. I'll be getting the leaflets tonight and they'll be delivered to you. There'll be transport, but it's not my department. The stuff's got to be dished out tomorrow. Some for the factories, some house to house" (La Guma, *In the Fog* 16). The narrator shows that actions are so important that they take place at the same time, and in different parts of the country, i.e., "At night, it's best...sure. At the same time you got to try and find people in your district ready to have meetings in their home ... I'll talk to them. That's for a start. The same things happen in other places. We'll spread out from there" (La Guma, *In the Fog* 16). Unlike Beukes who is most of the time resilient, confident, optimistic, and hopeful, Isaac's face is filled with pessimism, doubt, despair, and defeat. And despite his clandestine operations and vulnerable body, Beukes' resilience results in the victory black people. He believes that such a victory is possible provided that non-white community decides to put an end to the reign of the white monolith. As if to answer and minimise Isaac's pessimism as well as many other non-Whites who have lost hope, Beukes says, "It depends on the tempo we can keep up and the initial interest we can work on. We mustn't slacken" (La Guma, *In the Fog* 17).

Once again, La Guma reports that just like Isaac, Tommy shows pessimism. He knows Beukes as an activist and privileged actor in the Defiance

² The Defiance Campaign in 1952 was the first large-scale, multi-racial political mobilization against apartheid laws under a common leadership – by the African National Congress, South African Indian Congress, and the Coloured People's Congress. More than 8,000 trained volunteers went to jail for "defying unjust laws," laws that had grown worse since the National Party came to power in 1948. Volunteers were jailed for failing to carry passes, violating the curfew on Africans, and entering locations and public facilities designated for one race only. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/governance-projects/defiance-campagin/index.htm>

Campaign of disobedience. Tommy's testimony illustrates that Beukes is the symbol of resilience as "He [Tommy] knew vaguely that Beukes' 'business' involved handing out printed papers during the night, calling on people to strike, even being arrested" (La Guma, *In the Fog* 31). And even more, Beukes is as if fully charged and invested with a particular mission in all circumstances. La Guma writes "Beukes read the carboned message: leaflets herewith. Leaflets must be distributed in your section on the night of Thursday (there was a date) but not before or after. Repeat, only Thursday night. Those responsible for distribution are reminded to take all necessary precautions" (La Guma, *In the Fog* 31). The conviction of resilient demonstrators meet the need to acquire democracy and freedom in South Africa. As far as non-Whites are resolutely committed to reject the passes, the backboned open sesame for non-white rights' deprivation and trivialisation, restrictions and limitations of any kind. Seen from this perspective, La Guma emphasises the collective struggle in the following passage:

In the Township, the word had gone around for the surrender or destruction of all passes that day. The passes would be taken to the White man's Police Station and dumped there ... *Away with the passes today. Everybody to the police station to dump the passes ...* Away with the passes today. Everybody to the Police Station to dump the passes. The Government is going to make a statement about passes today. ... From today on, no more passes. Everybody to the Police Station to return the passes to the Whites (La Guma, *In the Fog* 101, italics original).

And as if to show the success of Defiance Campaign – in terms of a response to the call of a people aware of the generalised and alarming misery – the narrator reports Blacks to defy and overcome all deadlocks with the purpose of carrying out the resistance. In the following passage, the narrator mentions that even children, teenagers and old men mobilised to say no to the pass laws:

Throughout the warming most of the population of Township drifted towards the vacant lot in front of the Police Station. By midday a large crowd had gathered, shifting, ebbing, eddying, like a continuously disturbed puddle ... There were elderly people and children who had stayed away from the steel Town, to show that they were tired of regimentation and chattels, of bullying police and arrogant foremen, of fines and taxes and

having too little money with which to buy food ... all the time cries were raised from the crowd while, 'Away with the passes', and 'Down with pass laws' groups were singing the old songs of struggle (La Guma, *In the Fog* 101-102).

The protesters' rejection of hateful passes helps to emphasise the common fate of those in the resistance movement instead of the fates of individuals. Mamphela Ramphele suggests that La Guma's position in the heterogeneous community gives him "the capacity for intellectual awareness of one's environment and the position one occupies in the power structure of one's society. It helps individuals to demystify ideology and to limit the impact of the constraints of a hegemonic order in social relations" (Ramphele 5). He uses such a position while focusing on the racial and economic system in which the protagonists live, the political consciousness of the characters and the nature of the political resistance movement. La Guma's intention is to insist that the struggle to liberate the non-Whites from the apartheid system requires a collective responsibility that takes into account all the races trampled on in South Africa. This means that, the polemical writer intends to call for collective commitment to break down racial barriers in order to establish justice, equality and unity among all South Africans, without exclusivity, whether white, Black or Coloured, through the prism of a discursive deracialisation.³

Conclusion

Remembering Alex La Guma amounts to scrutinising his polemical literary works, which have helped to delve into South African recent overwhelming history. This paper has examined the polemicist's ideological commitment to human freedom and liberation from the evils of apartheid. The study has emerged the author's inner conviction that Whites and Blacks can/must live together in South Africa with the objective of transcending adversity. The texts' analysis has helped to establish a social balance between Whites and

³ A term used for the rhetorical removal of "race" from potentially racially motivated arguments (Goodman, S., & Burke, S., 2011).

non-Whites so that there are no longer private individuals as such, but that they create a synergy of thoughts. The discussion has covered apartheid's harshness and its outrageous economic and rights' deprivation, restrictions, and limitations in several respects. These points have permitted us to discuss La Guma's polemics, which unveil non-white South Africans' collective awareness and resilience. Sociocriticism with an emphasis on perceived racial injustices and calls for deracialisation or radical changes to outrageous and hateful apartness policy through revolution.

From a counter-hegemonic reading of works under consideration, this paper has examined protagonists' close links with apartheid martyrs and anti-apartheid heroes' struggles. Nelson Mandela and his comrades' inner conviction has always been a call for a well-built democracy and freedom established in the "rainbow" nation as *The Freedom Charter* ultimately states "... And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white, together – equals, countrymen and brothers – adopt this FREEDOM CHARTER. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing nothing of our strength and courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won" (N. Mandela, 1995, p.204). South Africa should be deracialised and reconciled, according to the Guma's polemics. The dream of the South African community is to live in a "rainbow" nation, without discrimination based on skin colour, race, or religion. The apartheid harshness stemming from rights deprivation, restrictions and limitations that have dehumanised black South Africans as a whole.

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