

# **THE RED CAR**

BY CHARLES HOOPER

**Re-typed - 31 May 2008**

This is the article I found in M.B. Yengwa's memorabilia that Bongzi Dlomo gave to me for safekeeping. Subsequently, we arranged for Mrs Yengwa to present MB's papers at Luthuli Museum at Groutville. MB was the secretary during Luthuli's presidency of the ANC. This original (and to my knowledge unpublished) article -14 typed pages entitled "The Red Car" and a copy of Hooper's book "Brief Authority" are in my possession. When it is possible, I will send these to Groutville.

*This is a re-typed version of the Hooper's manuscript:*

**The list of those who knew some of the facts about the escape in 1963 from Marshall Square, and then out of South Africa via Swaziland, of Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich begins to read like the bidding at the mass of All Saints' Day.**

Sheila endured it; Bram Fischer ordered and organised it; Vernon and Yolande Berrange dealt with the Swaziland end, and cast us for our parts; Shulamith Muller was out when I appealed to her for help; Mimi Tloome filtered back some of the relevant facts afterwards; Lovell spoke the epilogue.

They are all dead. All knew that the public version of events was riddled with fiction. Goldreich and Wolpe will have their accounts of what happened; this is mine.

In the middle of 1963, acting on the information of a double agent named Ludi, the South African security forces surrounded an estate on the fringe of Johannesburg, known as Lilyleaf Farm, and found in their net the top leaders of the African National Congress, and its allies, who were not (like Yengwa) already

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facing charges, or (like Mandela) already in custody or (like Luthuli) confined to distant places, or (like Tambo) abroad. What came to be called the Rivonia Trial, in which life sentences were handed down to Mandela and Sisulu and six others, subsequently took place. These men had been in varying degrees, underground since 1960 when the ANC was banned; we had been visited by some in Swaziland; now they were above ground and about to have the whole book thrown at them. The trial and its outcome are history.

Soon after the initial arrest, and long before the trial, four of the arrested men broke out of Marshall Square police headquarters in the centre of Johannesburg. Two did not come up for air until they reached Dar es Salaam; but Goldreich and Wolpe pitched up on our doorstep in pre-independence Swaziland, and the next part of their story became confused inferior fiction, the reason for which will emerge.

The news that four men had declined Marshall Square hospitality and disappeared into the night, leaving no forwarding address, was some slight antidote to the disaster; but, for private reasons, for us they were the wrong four. It was an apartheid accident; the african men under arrest were kept in separate quarters, and even Bram Fischer could not arrange two simultaneous escapes; and the single escape could be worked only for two indians and two whites, with the help of a luckless young warder named Kriel, whose price was one coveted motor scooter – he got the scooter, but he also got six years hard, so he did not have an immediate chance to enjoy it.

Our guests did not come by arrangement. When the press announced the escape, I said flippantly to Sheila, 'Now I suppose we wait for them to materialise here.' At that point in our joint odyssey, our profile was too high for comfort. Comfort didn't seem to be what our lives were about. We had been banned in South Africa in 1958, and when we left for Swaziland in 1960, the Johannesburg Sunday Times gave this incident imaginative front-page coverage of poor quality. Rumbling followed in parliament. This, and our being known to the ANC hierarchy, resulted in the tendency of people on their way through

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Swaziland – not that there was a way through –to home in on us; as did several Swazi politicians in search of ideas, pending independence. Hence my idle comment.

The days and the weeks passed and nothing happened; or, rather, we failed to notice what was happening. We were being auditioned, meticulously, by Vernon and Yolande Berrange. Vernon was a South African Barrister of eminence. Some time before this the Berranges had struck up a friendship with us, and we had become -- their phrase –their 'best friends in Swaziland.' We went occasionally to their Swaziland home near Siteki, close to the Mozambican border, 40 miles away.

Now and then they visited us on school campus where we taught and I was chaplain. After the Marshall Square breakout, we saw more of them. The breakout was mentioned, it must have been, but idly. Casually they established the dates of the school holidays, the routines of the sisters who ran it, and who was in residence when. It was skilfully done.

The route finally chosen for the two men who left via Swaziland had two stops in South Africa, each, like their destination, at the home of the Anglican priest. What this tells us about Anglican priests eludes me still. The journey was made by two cars; there were trial runs right through from Johannesburg on the two Fridays preceding the decisive one; none of the fall guys in dog collars was given a hint of what lay ahead. The two stops on the long South African haul were for quick refuelling while the vital passengers took cover; for us, under British protection, was reserved the role of providing extended hospitality. The Berranges had us sized up with fair accuracy. They were wrong in concluding that it would serve them best to bounce us, but right enough in deciding that there was no danger of our rushing for the Raj when we saw what was on the doorstep.

Was I ungracious when I answered my doorbell on the third Friday and the two men standing in the drizzle checked that I was who they hoped I was? I said, 'You must be Goldreich and

Wolpe. But where is Walter Sisulu, where is Mandela? Oh well come in. One could say we've been expecting you. You must have had a raw time.' As they shuffled into the dingy passage, I caught a glimpse of the car they'd come in gleaming under the dripping avocado, but it was too dark to see the colour or the make. When we'd threaded our way through the warren of rooms to the large attractive rondavel, I introduced them to Sheila. 'We have guests, Goldreich and Wolpe.' She said, 'Just the two of you? I thought there were four. And what about Mandela and Sisulu?'

Poor men; they looked shaken. They were in fact far more shaken than at first we knew. Using a forest track, they had crossed the border cramped agonisingly in the boot of the car outside. Once across, they had been released, and the second car had turned back, taking their driver. From then on they had fumbled their way to where they were now, free, but not home and dry.

For two weeks before the journey, they had spent the daylight hours of every day in the ceiling of a Johannesburg home, where any unwonted sound might land them back in Marshall Square. At night, when the ubiquitous (and almost omniscient) servants were in their quarters outside, they had been able to come down briefly, to eat and wash and take a little exercise; for the rest, they had to keep unnaturally still, and endure their company as best they could. All the decisions were in other hands. They could only wait.

Now, with their arrival on our doorstep, they had succeeded in carrying out their immediate instructions, and had come to the end of the initiative they would normally have had. They were hungry for directives.

Both were on edge, they exuded tension. Wolpe the larger of the two was a burly man, slower in movement and speech than Goldreich, and so more restful. Goldreich was darker, wiry and compact, and was probably more aggressive and nervous.

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Decisions, very few in this situation, may have lain with him, but it was not easy to discern. They were an ill-sorted pair, with one overriding purpose in common and not much else. Their mutual tolerance was strained: they needed a holiday from each other; but that would have to wait.

The next three days are scarcely differentiated in my memory. Early on I asked them what came next. Apart from knowing that they had a phone call to make, they were at a loss; or that was what they said. They awaited orders; but whose they could not, or did not, say. They knew as well as we did that to the east was Mozambique, Salazar country, which would be privileged to return them to Marshall Square. And on the other three sides lay the country they had left, though its government did not know this yet. But, apart from the phone-call their briefing ended on arrival. I wondered if Berrange might turn up; but our guests assured us that he was not taking risks, and was establishing an alibi by making court appearances in Johannesburg on Friday and Monday; between, he intended to be ostentatiously not in Swaziland.

By day the 'escape car' proved to be a brilliant geranium Ford, second-hand but practically new, a well-kept six cylinder affair. I was glad the school and staff were away, and the sisters in retreat. Then Goldreich produced the car's papers; it had been registered in the name of 'C. Hooper, Siteki.'

'But why on earth,' I asked, trying to work it out, 'was the bloody thing registered in my name? Why not Smith, or van der Merwe, or say Berrange?'

'So that you can get it transferred and get it a Swaziland registration.'

'So that I can? Why? And why me?'

'The idea is for it just to disappear. Those were our instructions. As soon as possible.'

'I doubt if Vernon is in a position to instruct me. Still, I'll think it over; but I don't live in Siteki.'

'Yes, well, that was our mistake. We had to buy it in a hurry, and we forgot the name Bremersdorp, and put down Siteki.'

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'A name you could remember. But did you buy the thing yourselves?'

'We were sent to a particular garage just as it was closing, and paid for it in hard cash.'

'It must have cost you a packet. Who signed? I mean who signed my name?'

'I suppose I must have.'

He was beginning to look unhappy, so I decided not to tease him with the idea that he'd committed a felony—lawyers were thick on the ground! Wolpe was a lawyer; so were Fischer and Berrange. No doubt they 'instructed' him.

Sheila listened to this conversation with interest, but she did not comment at the time. I took in the news that, if things went wrong, I would have to do some agile thinking: "C. Hooper, Siteki' –how did one explain that? There was no such person, but would C. Hooper, Bremersdorp' ever get the chance to say so? The implausibility of the truth was to become something of a problem. It seemed high time that one of them should make the phone call; but no - their instructions were to dial a certain number at a certain time on Monday. There was nothing to do but accept at least two more days of this. I had no idea what contingent arrangements might exist; an unplanned move might bring disaster.

On Sunday morning I went, in their car, the land wide and drenched in sunlight and silence and heat, half across Swaziland to see if Shulamith should come up with any helpful words or phrases. It was an idiotic thing to do; I wanted to feel that surge of horse-power. But Shulamith was out, and there were no repercussions. On the way back I stopped to find food for our guests, and closed the driver's door on my little finger and had to get in again and drive to the Nazarene Hospital to have the loose end stitched on; no analgesic, not even an aspirin, three stitches. Serve you right, I thought, running around in a hot car out of your class, for all to see.

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When I got back I found our guests with Sheila in the garden, basking in a world that was unconfined, under a huge sky. They looked etiolated, but they were becoming aware that they were not, for the moment, in somebody's ceiling, or in Marshall Square or the boot of a car.

Each was less impatient of the other's company, and now they grew voluble about the arrest and the break-out and the journey, and about the organisation of Lilyleaf Farm before they had been rounded-up, and generally about what was going on in the resistance, at home and abroad, most enlightening. But they worried too: they were safe for the moment, but not yet clear. Among other things, they worried about the Swazi woman who worked for us. Sheila said, 'Lucy knows exactly who you are; she knew it as soon as she set eyes on you. I've issued no warnings, but she won't tell a soul. You could call it Swazi reticence.'

Wolpe said, 'Well, we're in your hands.' Was I now to be held responsible, with no qualifications, for an underground cell, in addition to having this car hung round my neck? Goldreich dug up some earth and held it in his cupped hands, this is British protected soil,' he said. 'How stunning, how wonderful'

On Monday morning at the indicated time, I introduced Goldreich to the phone in the school office. He phoned a man, Aldwinkle in Siteki who did charter flights in a four-seater Piper Cub. Goldreich said, 'You're expecting this call. When do we meet at the agreed place?' and then after a pause, 'That will do fine.'

After he'd put the phone down, I said, 'Vernon lines up Aldwinkle and says nothing to me. Security, no doubt. Do you plan to tell your current hosts when and where this meeting takes place?'

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Goldreich had the grace to look slightly abashed. 'Tomorrow at eight, at the airstrip here. He'll fly us to Bechuanaland. From there it ought to be straightforward.'

The four of us, all perhaps a little light-headed at the prospect, spent much of the day preparing to part. How were they to get to the airstrip?

They looked blank, until one of them recalled that Berrange had suggested I might be asked to take them. Oh, all right; but what did they say if somebody at the airstrip (where at that date there were no formalities about flights to the Republic or the High Commission Territories) asked who they were and where they had been staying. They had no ideas, none at all; and at that point and just as well in view of what was to come –fiction got into its stride.

'You've been staying here,' I said, 'there isn't anywhere else. Hotels can be checked, and you can't have been in the long grass. Now, why were you here and what were you doing? I'm an Anglican clergyman. Only nice people visit Anglican clergyman. They don't associate with riff-raff, its all changed since the Gospels were written. So you've got to be nice. But what kind of nice? Scholars and gentlemen, something respectable. Sociologists? Historians, some sort of researchers? Anthropologists - no they'd have made contact with an anthropoi. All right, let's try visitors from somewhere outside Africa. England?—it's just possible there won't be an old Etonian at the airstrip. Why does a friend from England spend three days, call it a weekend, with us? Did Barbara Castle suggest it? No, I've already spent a full hour of life being interrogated about her. I didn't enjoy it; anyway, she evokes Left Politics. Canon Collins, then? He must be one of the few Anglican clergymen who's out of reach and not yet involved, another radical priest, so your reason for touring round may have something to do with the church. Now what? Could you, do you think, be clergymen yourselves?'



Sheila said, 'Look at them carefully. Then slowly repeat your question,' and left the room. Either of them, alone, might pass muster for a few minutes; together, they didn't even look like what they were, a lawyer and an architect. They looked irredeemably underworld, the Lilyleaf mafia. Sheila came back with a couple of threadbare stocks and two clerical collars: these made a quite unexpected difference for the better. If you didn't stare, and if the collar didn't strangle him, Wolpe might suggest to the unperceptive a bumbling parson - he'd need lessons in bumbling. And was Goldreich just conceivably a very smooth, very Anglo-Catholic priest? No, not conceivably; but then did they need careers back to ordination? I suggested that we begin with what we had—one Wolpe, one Goldreich, two collars, two stocks—and jack that up and add or subtract whatever helped. Wolpe said they had a whole suitcase of disguises in their room, but I said no, not false whiskers, and anyway they were tourists. I was to regret this bit of producer's hubris. Their readiness to fall in with any suggestion we made was unnerving.

After a good deal of experiment and foolery, offsetting the tensions and irritations among us, we settled for the clergyman-on-tour clothing; not a disguise, but something which would mislead the casual eye, and at least carry no hint of escaped prisoners wanted for High Treason, Magwitch and Provis.

They had to have names now. One turned into Mitchell, the other into Shipton, Though I've forgotten who was which, or why. Pastors Mitchell and Shipton had come to us with a letter of introduction from Canon Collins. On what business? 'You don't have to say why,' Sheila said. Just talk about the Mother's Union or something,' and Wolpe said with real anguish, 'The Mother's what! I've never heard of it! We know nothing that will fit.' I said unsympathetically, 'Sheila's right, you don't need an agenda, only vague church interests, church education—this is a school. And Aldwinkle already knows you're bogus all through; you won't have to make conversation behind him in that shaky little plane. We're concerned with a few minutes between the car and the plane, and a couple of airstrip personnel.'

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Before the cloud-cuckoo day ended, Goldreich, extricating bundles of high-denomination banknotes from two loaded pockets, offered to pay for the trouble they'd caused. Simultaneously, we both said no.

In the morning, when the sisters were due to come out of silence, I took out of the garage my own car, a dilapidated grey Humber. I decided to drop the two men about a quarter of a mile short of the airstrip and let them walk the rest with grip and haversack. If asked to guess, I'd have said their luggage was a shaving kit and money. No Prayer Books, that was certain, and not much use if there had been. As I drew up to set them down, I said, 'There's your transport,' and the Piper Cub sank slowly across our bows. They began to walk.

At home the first thing that assailed my vision was the brilliant incongruous scarlet car. Its status was ambiguous, it invited questions; I moved it into the garage, leaving mine, as I often did, under the avocado.

Indoors I said to Sheila, 'Well, they should be airborne by now. I suppose next I'd better go to town and make this red car disappear; it embarrasses me.'

The strength of her reaction started my rivets; 'No, no, and no! You must be unhinged! Can't you see the damn thing's a trap and a bribe!' We mulled it over for a few minutes, intuition in good order against fatuous sweet reason, and then Sister Prudence came to tell me I was wanted on the phone.

It was Goldreich at the airstrip. 'We've got the wrong pilot, A fellow called Truter.'

'I expect he can fly.'

There was panic rising in Goldreich's voice; 'But what must we do?'

'Just get on that bloody plane, the two of you, for God's sake, and go.

Goldreich gasped slightly and put down the phone; then I heard the second click as the listener, too, rang off.

Even Swaziland ran to its own Security Branch; his name was of the Freeman-Freeland sort; I'd met him once or twice about refugees. I reflected now that, in the last few minutes, he'd collected a perfect specimen of an underling asking for orders and getting them.

I have little doubt now that Freeman-Freeland had been privately briefed by the Resident Commissioner. If the missing men were to leave via Swaziland, the last thing the Resident would want would be to catch them at it. At this moment Freeman and the Resident would have held the rest of these men's lives in their hands; the one thing certain is that Freeman took a quite abnormal amount of time reporting what he'd heard to the local police commissioner.

None of this was on my mind when, at home, I found Sister Prudence with Sheila, and told them of the phone that rang off twice: 'We seem to be in the borshch, but I'm not sure yet how deep in.' We briefed Sister Prudence, who agreed to look unsurprised by any public version of events. Then a second sister pounded over the convent to call me to the phone, and I dawdled across and found Ansell, the Bremersdorp Station Commandant, on the line.

'Is that Reverend Hooper?'

'I'm Hooper, yes.'

'Do you know anything about two clergyman who left the airstrip by plane this morning?' Well, they'd left, and were now somewhere over South Africa.

'Yes, of course. They stayed in my home'

'Who are they?'

'Pastors Mitchell and Simpkin; Congregationalists, I think.'

'I must see you at once.'

'You can't possibly. I'm in a meeting.'

'No, I must see you at once.'

'I've told you I can't.' By 12.30 Goldreich and Wolpe would be in Bechuanaland, if they weren't already on the ground in Pretoria. 'Can you give me a single reason why I should shut down an important meeting to talk to you?'

Ansell began to splutter, so I finished off with, 'I should be free by 12.30, I could see you then. Here.' I rang off.

When I'd got back and collected a stray wit or two, I said to Sheila and Sister Prudence, 'That was Ansell. We're in an important meeting; we finish at 12.30. Now we know that this business will make headlines far and wide. Will somebody propose a vote of thanks to Berrange who left us to play by ear in the dark, agreed.' A firecracker went off behind my eyes: 'Do you two realise that if Goldreich and Wolpe are now sweating it out in Pretoria, nobody, probably not even you - will ever believe that I did not sell them down the river: they escaped; they came here; they are back inside; QED. And Truter is a loyal little Verwoerd man: he can do a service to baaskap, and collect the reward. And Goldreich knows I knew Truter was flying that plane.' Then the grenade exploded. 'Oh my God, did I say it would hit the headlines? It will whether they're in Pretoria or Lobatsi, but it won't be only their story; it will include everything any journalist can dig up, which means us too, and what they don't know they can invent. Can you imagine what Die Burger or The Sunday Times will make of this lot - omissions, additions, nuances, the Communist Front Anglican Church, the cloak of religion, there's almost nothing missing.'

We were not happy as we turned these developments over in what had become, for us, an important meeting. The crux seemed to be to get my version of these bizarre events into the newspapers first. This might inhibit other fantasists; and anybody who cast doubt on my manifest rectitude would risk being sued, a thing, editors are said to be touchy about. We thought at length of Laurence Gandar, the editor of the Rand Daily Mail, whom we had met about five years earlier. If he was willing to print my

story - as why should he not be? - I was in an unassailable position to get my version first.

But what was my version? We spent the next half-hour working at that, the bits to include, the bits to avoid.

It evolved essentially out of the story we'd invented for the escapers. It shed a new light for me on the gifts of a mature nun in lifelong vows; I already knew the other two.

I thought I'd better hear, first, what I said to Ansell. He appeared promptly with his swagger stick and Freeman. He pointed his stick at the avocado and said, the bonhomous approach, 'You should strip the bark off that; you'd get better fruit. May we talk somewhere?' I took them into a ramshackle ex-dining room with matchboard pseudo-beams and a lot of crevices for bats. They sat facing me, all of us uncomfortably sprawled on easy chairs that hadn't been serious for years. It was the standard interrogation layout, but this was a British-protected occasion, and Freeman, though he hardly uttered a word, left out the unwavering gimlet stare. Our eyes met from to time: he seemed mild, and perhaps faintly amused.

The story of our recent guests unfolded in response to Ansell's questions, a True-False Narration. No, I'd never seen either man before (T). They'd come on Friday (T), with a letter of introduction from Canon Collins (F). No, we hadn't expected them (T). They'd taken the letter of introduction away with them (F). No, I couldn't be certain they were clergymen (F), the letter bore it out, and one often went by what people wore: I'd never asked a policeman in uniform if he was a policeman. They arrived in a car (T). They left the car behind when they took to the air (T) They said they'd collect it on their way back (F). The car was now here (T) and of course Ansell could examine it. As far as I knew, they hadn't been in touch with anybody else (F) They'd said their next stop would be Basutoland else (F). But what was this all about, anyway?

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In the end, Ansell said, 'We don't think they were Mitchell and Shipton. Do you know who we think they really are?'

'I mustn't steal your surprise.'

Ansell managed the difficult feat of sitting forward in an uncooperative chair. He looked at me very straight, elbows out, hands grasping thighs: 'We think they're....Goldreich and Wolpe.'

'Oh, yes, those two, Scharnhorst and Gneisau. But I thought they'd been arrested some time ago... at Howick or somewhere?.....No, of course, it was someone else who was caught at Howick.... So in your view, we've been imposed on? Still, there's not much family silver.'

Ansell became brisk. 'May I see the quarters they used?' I took them to the scruffy room with its two school beds - poor men, those purgatorial springs - where Goldreich and Wolpe had left their high-class luggage. Its contents astonished all three of us: clothes and disguises for all occasions and for either sex. I remember the cascade of an auburn wig, and a range of professional make-up in tubs and tubes; there were even false eyelashes, and corsets, and a handbag. 'Yes,' I said, 'it does look a bit unusual for a couple of clergyman.'

Something was upsetting Ansell. He said 'A bit unusual! I want to see the car.'

'It's in my garage. Let me fetch the keys.'

Ansell put his finger on the embarrassing feature at once: 'Do you mean to tell me you leave your own car outside while you lock theirs away?'

'I don't mean to tell you anything so obvious. These men were strangers and I took them in.' Ansell seemed, if anything, more put out.

I moved my car and backed the red one out; the two of them poked for a while until finally Ansell said, 'I'm afraid I'll have to take this car. And the luggage as well!'

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'You're welcome to the lot. Just remember that my fingerprints are all over the driver's area, you can take a sample if you like.' While they piled the luggage into the car, I looked at my watch: by now the issue was settled, Goldreich and Wolpe were retaken or free.

At least this encounter had not been with the South African Police; it was an improvement to have men like Ansell kept in check.

First I put the car's papers into the kitchen stove and watched them burn. Then I found Sheila, who was getting knotted up. 'Since you won't guess who Ansell thinks Goldreich and Wolpe really are, let me tell you: he thinks they're Goldreich and Wolpe, a deception had been practised on us.'

'But is it all right?'

'So far, in a formal sort of way. They know I'm being disingenuous, not to say lying, but I doubt if they can do anything about it. As far as Swaziland is concerned, it's actually lawful here to have guests whom Vorster and Verwoerd don't like. Ansell will probably be on to Pretoria about now. He'll phone back triumphantly if things have gone wrong; for some reason, Ansell really dislikes me.'

'I've told you before, it's the cut of your jib: you alienate policemen.'

'Anyway, if we hear nothing, they're probably clear. Lets eat and then try Gandar.'

It took a little time to reach Gandar, the man at the top of the pyramid, but eventually I was able to introduce myself and tell him where I was phoning from. I said, 'If you want it, I've got the exclusive story about how Goldreich and Wolpe come to be at this moment in Lobatsi.' Gandar's surprise was reassuring, though carefully suppressed.' He wanted the story, all right; but he did not want my condition: 'You can have it provided I'm allowed to tell it my own way, and provided you print anything attributed to me inside quotation marks, word for word.'

'I could never give such an undertaking, there may be legal obstacles; no, I can't possibly agree.'

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'Your lawyers won't mind one bit. There's nothing remotely actionable. I know what you are taking about and it doesn't apply.'

'I'm afraid what you ask is quite unacceptable.'

'All right - It was just a gesture. You leave me to find out what the Editor of Die Vaderland will think of the exclusive lowdown on the escape of South Africa's two most wanted men.'

I put the phone down, an act that seemed to punctuate the day. I simply waited among the school stationery, seeing with terrible clarity how lying to the police in the morning led to attempted moral blackmail in the afternoon. Where would it end? Thank God my bishop was in Toronto.

The phone rang after fifteen minutes or so; sure enough it was Gandar, who'd consulted his lawyers and, yes, they agreed to his undertaking to do what I had suggested, yes-yes exactly, and he would put me through to a stenographer.

I had no notes, but by now, with Ansell's help, I had mastered my material. The stenographer slowed me down: she kept breaking off to voice her thrilled incredulity. What she read over to me in the end seemed unlikely to embarrass absent friends, there was no mention of the school, and Canon Collins had become 'a prominent English churchman'. Yet again, I put down the phone.

Next morning's Rand Daily Mail was dominated, on its first two pages, by the escape story, and Gandar had kept to his undertaking; so there the authorised version was, a scoop. This was embellished by a photographic treatment of the upper ends of Goldreich and Wolpe masquerading as the upper ends of two clergymen. Included was an account of their arrival in Lobatsi, whence they had been promptly spirited far north to Francistown. Truter must have been unhappy: on the day this news broke, the SA Minister of Transport prohibited over-flying, so he was not to have another chance to be a national hero.



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The Rand Daily Mail's self-portrait of the Dupe as Outraged Halfwit served its purpose. Having no alternative source, other newspapers basically followed the authorised version, however implausible it might have seemed; so, by the time the SA parliament had got round to its ritual denunciations, the story had moved on.

Unfortunately Ansell did not follow suit. He phoned. He said, 'Come and get your car.'

'As you know, I've got my car.'

'Man, you know what I mean.'

'If you're talking about the one you took, you must be fully aware it's not mine.'

His tone was almost conspiratorial: 'Oh no, of course it's yours. I've got proof.'

'You talk in riddles, Ansell; no such proof exists.' I felt I could hardly tell him that even the forged proof, evidence of which had clearly been unearthed for him in South Africa, had perished in my stove. Anyway, he knew I was not 'C.Hooper, Siteki'. It was the first of his nuisance calls.

I wandered into the kitchen where I found Sheila confronting in the doorway a reporter from Die Transvaler. She seemed to be coping: 'Look, you little squirt, I'll trouble you to get the hell of my house.' All he wanted was a short authentic interview. He raised his camera and Sheila closed the door on it hard. The cost to his newspaper was his expenses and one camera, no interview, but he could hardly complain: it was our door. I said 'Bully for you,' and Sheila burst into tears. The press left us alone.

I was getting launched, now that I was relieved of anxieties about the safety of our former guests and the reputation of the Anglican Church, on a new worry: how would we, with our one-year temporary residence permits, stand with the raj? And I was free, now, to feed this anxiety with the rage I felt about what our 'best friends in Swaziland' might have brought down on us.

A plane of suitable size crossed Africa from Dar es Salaam to gather up Goldreich and Wolpe; that night it was blown up in Francistown, and the two men got asylum in police cells until a second plane came. This was big league stuff: somebody in Pretoria was in real earnest.

Though the main story had moved, the red car appeared in follow-up stories for a week. It was photographed at the police station: it only needed Ansell holding an elephant rifle to put his foot on its bonnet. But it was simply 'The Escape Car' - no newspaper tried to fasten ownership on me. Still, I went cold when I remembered how, but for Sheila's insistence, I would be pinning it firmly on to myself two doors away from Ansell when he first phoned me.

Ansell persisted: 'Reverend Hooper, when are you coming to collect your car? The tyres are going flat.'

'You took it, Ansell; you bring it back. I didn't ask you to impound the thing.'

Then it was the District Commissioner on the phone saying the Resident wanted to see me. We met in the DC's office, where the DC sat at his desk and said nothing throughout; but this was no interrogation. Brian Marwick, the Resident Commissioner, the current embodiment of the raj, explained that we were meeting there because the office in Mbabane was besieged by reporters who wanted to know what he intended doing about Hooper, and he preferred to spare me that - a gracious deed in a naughty world. I answered a couple of questions in line with the authorised version; he put an end to that by leaning over and patting my knee and saying, 'That's right. You stick to your story.'

'Well, sir, it's the only one I've got.' So there was no rehash, and nothing about the red car.

As far as I could judge from the drift of what followed, Marwick's main, and perhaps only, interest was to establish that I was not running a regular escape route. I have never seen how one

proves that one is not doing something which one might be doing, but he seemed satisfied.

He gave me one piece of advice: might it not be as well if I now found somebody else to do the job of helping refugees? Perhaps this was a tactful order, but it cost me nothing to agree.

Was there, the Resident wanted to know, anything I wished to ask of him? I said there was one thing: we wanted to remain in Swaziland, and this unlooked-for event did nothing to make me feel secure about that; I was furious about being bounced in the way I had been.

Marwick slid his question in neatly: Did I perhaps have some idea who bounced me? I said, 'None; none at all,' and then I thought, Oh no, Berrange, I owe you nothing, not one jot of loyalty. So I looked at the ceiling and said, 'it does interest me that this car was registered in my name, but in Siteki. Siteki makes me wonder.' Though I realised as I spoke that I'd slipped, the matter was not pursued.

Only when Marwick said, standing up, 'Well, we'll look after you, never fear,' did I realise what his earlier question 'was there anything I wanted to ask' meant: did we after the Francistown explosion, want police protection? He patted my shoulder and added, 'If you feel you need me for anything, don't hesitate to ask.' Was he thinking, perhaps, of the other two escapers?

I said, 'Thank you sir,' and left: and when next got Ansell on the line, I didn't hesitate. I phoned the Resident and asked him to take Ansell off my back. It was the last time I heard from Ansell. Subsequently, Major Ansell found a niche in Durban, in the South African Special Branch.

That would have been the end of the episode as it concerned us, but for the final Berrange visit. And the red car. The Berranges came at the weekend. At first, when I answered the doorbell, Yolande seemed to have come alone in an estate wagon; but then a rear door opened and Vernon shot into our passage. He'd

arrived flat on the car floor; taking no chances. In the big rondavel, greetings were curt. At first I thought Vernon's arrogant tone and manner signified anger, until I began to wonder if he was not rattled silly. He demanded abruptly, 'What went wrong?'

'Among other things, rather a lot of them, Goldreich phoned from the airstrip and Freeman or Freeland was listening in. I've got no phone: he must have had to ask for me by name.'

'Goldreich phoned! What the blazes did he do that for?'

'They'd got Truter as their pilot.'

'Truter, why Truter? I told Aldwinkle to do it in person.'

'Maybe Aldwinkle felt like taking no risks, maybe he likes to make his own decisions, maybe he had a bad cold.'

'Is the car registered in your name?'

'You've been reading the papers. What do you think?'

'I asked you a question. Did you transfer it to your name?' This was courtroom stuff, counsel dealing with a refractory witness. I wondered where Vernon thought he was. Sheila and I began to answer together. She said, 'What explanation would you like to suggest for our owning the "escape car"?' I said, 'It appears to have been put in my name in Benoni or somewhere.'

'Yes, but I gave explicit instructions to have it registered in Swaziland.'

'So one of them told us; but Vernon, look: I simply don't take instructions from you, yesterday, today, tomorrow. The car is still registered in the name of C. Hooper, Siteki.'

'Siteki, Siteki, Siteki!' Vernon was shouting now. 'How the hell did that happen? I told them exactly how to register it.'

'In my name, forging my signature, without my knowledge or consent. They did their best to follow instructions; they forgot my home town - I suppose they were flustered - so they put down your home town; nice irony. Would you like to moderate your voice and tell us why you gave us no warning.'

'It was all cobbled together at the last moment.'

'Somebody did trial runs all the way here on two previous Fridays.'

'Did they tell you that?'

'They hardly stopped talking for three days, except when one of them broke off to comb his hair-

## *Footprints*

'- using as a mirror,' Sheila finished off, 'the glass in front of my El Greco Madonna.'

Yolande broke in pacifically. 'How did the police get the car in the first place?'

'Ansell charged up here with Freeman. It wasn't third degree, but he asked questions. How had they come, how had they left, where was the car now? I could hardly say it had driven itself away in the night. I didn't refuse to let him take it -it's not mine. So, they took it, along with the luggage.'

'What luggage?'

'The fancy clothes and the disguise kit.'

Unexpectedly, this knocked the wind out of both of them. In assembling the props, various items had been bought by various people; now the South African Police might trace these through shops. The Berranges were thoroughly alarmed, one could see why - yet Ansell need never have seen the luggage.

The encounter simmered on for a while. As they made to leave, Vernon said, 'Is your house watched?'

'No idea. Marwick said he'd look after us, whatever that means. We have not seen a soul.'

They left as they'd come, with Vernon in the back on the floor. Sheila said to me, 'I wonder who next will qualify to be their best friends in Swaziland. I resign.'

'Very dignified; but I think we've both been sacked.'

Standing outside the police station in all weathers, the red car delivered itself of one final jolt. Weeks later, I was called out of my classroom to find Leo Lovell, a South African with a law practice in Swaziland, proffering a document. Goldreich and Wolpe wanted to sell 'their' car; the snag was that it was registered in 'my' name; would I sign this affidavit so that the sale could take place? It was a longish document, which Lovell wanted me to sign forthwith.

But I said, 'I'm busy, leave it with me,' and with that he had to be content.

## *Footprints*

The 'Affidavit' was couched in narrative form, a novelette running into pages and including a number of fictions, all mine and all already current. Whoever was employing Lovell knew they were fictions. And Lovell? Now I was being invited to sign this farrago on oath. I was never in danger of perjuring myself; but I did want to see the end of that car.

I temporised and Lovell kept pestering me, two phone calls and another visit. The second visit was acrimonious. I said, 'I will sign what I wish. When I'm ready.'

'But dammit, Goldreich and Wolpe are in a hurry.'

"No doubt. Someone should have thought of that before they forged my signature. I'm not obliged to sign any affidavit; as far as I'm concerned, that car can stay where it is till it rots. I've told you: I'll sign when I'm ready, I won't be hustled.'

My own draft affidavit ran to three lines: I was not the owner of the car, make, year, registration number; I had not authorised anybody to acquire it in my name. I took this to a local solicitor whom I knew by repute and explained the situation. He read both versions, a good deal diverted by the longer one; he thought mine should meet the need. So it was got up by the typist, signed, stamped, and witnessed, no fee.

I phoned Lovell and offered to post it, but he preferred to collect it in person. The sight of how his (or his clients) creative writing had shrunk to nothing in the wash caught him entirely off guard, but his fury was something he couldn't explain: the scrap of paper he took from me met with all his requirements.

Lovell bought the car himself. Goldreich and Wolpe prospered; with no animus towards them, I still wish they'd been Sisulu and Mandela.

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## WHO IS CHARLES HOOPER ?

Who is Reverend Charles Hooper and what is he doing in this book. Let him tell you himself. Africa South - Volume 2 - No. 4 - July-Sept. 1958 (editor- Ronald M. Segal), contains an article by Reverend Charles Hooper which tells more about himself, his wife and their activities!

### 3. DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST

Rev. CHARLES HOOPER

*Anglican Rector of Zeerust.*

It is, I suppose, no accident that the Anglican Rectory in Zeerust became for a time one of the focal points of recent events in that area. Accidents there were, however, such as our discovery that there was no place in Zeerust where defending counsel from Johannesburg could interview their African clients. It seemed reasonable to my wife and myself to offer the defence the use of the Rectory for consultations. We had seen the police breaking up attempts at consultations on the Zeerust pavements; and we knew that, apart from the pavements, the only place for consultation was Johannesburg, 150 miles away, or the Reserves, forbidden to Whites without permits, and scattered over 80 miles. From the use of the Rectory as a meeting place for client and counsel to the use of the Rectory as a source of help or a place of refuge was a quick and inevitable development.

But the basis of our involvement in the toils of the Zeerust agony is not accidental. It is really an exceedingly simple matter. Long before there was any question of the issue of reference books to African women, long before the holding of illegal tribal councils and the burning of houses, we had both come to know as fellow human beings the people among whom we had elected to work. My wife and I knew the names of their children, and the places of work of absent husbands. We accepted gifts of eggs from destitute widows, knowing the wound that refusal would inflict. We were asked to settle feuds and comfort the bereaved. Daily we moved among the Bafurutse in the relationship of missionaries to people entrusted to our care—a relationship as remote from the master-servant one as can possibly be imagined. There was, of course, an inequality about the relationship, for priest and teacher are in authority over their people. But one of the points of such authority is that it is something accepted, not something imposed; and it is counter-balanced by the example of Maundy Thursday, by the Christ who girded Himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet. In the event, it was we who learned humility.

We were involved, also, by the simple fact that we are

South African citizens. To put it naively, we believe in law and order; and so, a year ago, did the Bafurutse. Before April, 1957, there could have been few more peaceful districts than the Reserves near Zeerust, where 30,000 African people lived, settling their differences quietly according to tribal custom, without the clash and violence that are so appalling a feature of South African city life. We have watched the destruction among our people of this acceptance of rule by law. We have watched the emergence of gangster chiefs ruling by fear, terrorising their own people with the arrogant impunity afforded by police protection. And we have watched the police themselves reducing the Bafurutse to an acceptance of the belief that might is right. We have listened with horror to our people arguing with each other about whether the only solution to their dilemma is not the murder of the 'rebels,' as they have come to call the gangster chiefs. Inevitably we have taken part in such arguments, pleading with our people, sometimes for hours, not to follow the gangster example which they were experiencing on this scale for the first time. And we have listened, with perhaps greater horror, to the conversations of policemen. On one occasion a policeman—a youngster of about eighteen—said to me: "The Chief Police Commissioner is here, I hope he'll give us permission to shoot these bloody rubbish." On another occasion I was told, about an Anglican woman who had been arrested with others for having allegedly burnt her reference book: "The others pleaded guilty, so we are letting them go. But this one wouldn't plead guilty, so we're sending her to gaol." The moment I offered to bail her out, she too was released. But the classic expression of the police attitude to the recognized processes of law came during the hearings of the Commission of Enquiry, when an officer complained bitterly that the police were being made fools of, because accused persons who had found themselves legal defence were being acquitted on a large scale. Their legal defence, he maintained, was a serious cause of unrest!

And far more destructive of trust in the law than police talk has been police action. Raids in the small hours of the morning; the indiscriminate arrest of nearly naked women dragged out of their blankets and out of their houses in the night; assault by the police or in the presence of the police; the levying of indiscriminate fines by pro-Government Chiefs on people arrested by the police in the presence of the police; the terror-



ising of people who have dared to seek legal help, or to appeal against fines—all these, and more, have been the order of the day in the Zeerust district for more than a year now. Coupled with the fact that in not one case has action been taken on behalf of people alleging assault and bearing the marks of assault, it all amounts to simply this: almost everybody is afraid of the police, and nobody believes that a blameless life is any protection.

Simply because we are South Africans, it has been impossible for us, either by co-operation with the authority which sanctions such violation of law, or by gathering up our skirts and passing by with eyes averted on the other side, to consent to the undermining of the foundations on which a sane society must rest: regard for the rights of the individual and an adherence to natural law.

Our involvement in the Zeerust disturbances has brought consequences both for the Church and for our people. From very early on, once our position seemed clear to those in authority, it has been virtually impossible to transact Church business with the Native Affairs Department. And since the hearings of the Commission of Enquiry last November, not only have our frequent encounters with the police in the Reserves been extremely unpleasant, but Anglican Church members have had to run a sort of gauntlet. In the village of Motswedi, for instance, Anglicans on their way to Church services have encountered roaming 'bodyguards' who have prevented their attendance on the grounds that, instead of the normal words of administration at the time of Communion, the priest has gone down the line of Communicants hissing to each woman: "Burn your reference book!" In this same village a sort of smelling out has been conducted. It has deviated from its almost forgotten traditional pattern in that the objects of enquiry have been, not witches and heretics, but A.N.C. members, Anglicans, and Huddleston-boeties! The irony is that a year ago none but a few of the intelligentsia in the area had heard of either the African National Congress or of Fr. Huddleston.

At the Commission of Enquiry we listened to the official attitude towards our deviationist behaviour. The then Mayor of Zeerust stated how, with his own eyes, he had seen us "shaking hands with, and conversing with, Natives in our back-yard." How, he asked, were the White children of

Zeerust to be properly reared with such an example in their midst? The Zeerust Native Commissioner described "how we enticed Natives with tea and cigarettes, had A.N.C. members on our premises, had our photograph published in *Drum*," etc., etc. This official indictment did not contain any mention of incitement or other illegality; yet the indictment was made to illustrate that we were "causes of unrest"—that we were, in fact, guilty without being law-breakers.

I do not know what the Commission made of all this, as it has published no findings. But without question, during the three months between the date when the Commission concluded its hearing and the date when our entry into the Reserves was prohibited by Dr. Verwoerd, the business of carrying on our ordinary missionary functions became nerve-racking to an almost unbearable degree.

We returned early in December from our annual leave to find the Reserves dotted with armed police camps. Life in the villages was fear-ridden almost to the point of panic; and where previously there had been no more than a trickle of people leaving the area, there was now a daily exodus on a large scale. A number left the district via the Rectory, afraid to go to the Zeerust railway station as it was raided from time to time by groups of 'bodyguards'. They spent the daylight hours hiding in the long grass or in the house itself; and by night they made their way to stations further up the line. I shall not easily forget the day when I walked into my study expecting to find it empty and found in it seven women, some with babies, lying flat on the floor. They had heard that the 'bodyguards' had come to town and they were in full flight. It emerged that these women were out on bail awaiting the hearing of an appeal. They had been chosen as candidates for bail because of age, infirmity, or the fact that with them in gaol had been ailing babies. On their return to their village a couple were beaten by 'bodyguards', and all were immediately hustled out again by their friends who chartered a lorry for the purpose. Their chief, it appeared, took the original line that, he having put them into gaol, it was an act of defiance for them to emerge, bail or no bail; and he went on to fine their menfolk up to £10 each for having the temerity "to treat these guilty women as though they were precious china". The chartered lorry drove straight to the Rectory.

As day succeeded day in December, as the Christmas holidays

came and went, leaving in their wake turmoil, burned houses, mass arrests, small-scale riots, and one death, the Rectory took on at times the feel of an air-raid shelter. And most horrifyingly, the main victims of assault were women, many of them old women; and the assaults were not idle slaps; they were vicious attacks with sticks, with fists, and with sharp-edged slices of car tyre. We did not see the weapons; we did see, frequently, their effect: weals inches long, a quarter of an inch deep; bruises on heads, arms, backs, thighs; loose teeth and clothes clotted with blood.

But there was nothing, apart from elementary first-aid and an attempt at encouragement, to be done about it. We tried.

One wet Monday we took three thoroughly beaten women and their attorney to the police station to make statements and lay charges. The women were afraid to go without us; so, clinging to our antique belief that a police force is designed to protect people and deal with offenders, we went with them. We waited outside the charge office, watching through open doors. The attorney was inside with her clients. Beyond saying that she had brought the women to make statements, she said nothing and did nothing except listen. Half-way through the second statement, a senior Pretoria officer appeared. He read through the first statement and then came over to the attorney. He did not look at her, but said: "You must get outside."

"I am here in the interests of my clients."

"If you do not get outside," the officer jerked a thumb in the direction of the door, "I will have you put out bodily."

"I see." The attorney joined us on the verandah, and the statements were completed. While we waited three men were brought in. Two I did not know. The third I did not recognize at first. Behind a policeman's back he caught my eye and made signs to show that he had been assaulted, and then I recognized him. A week earlier he had been at the Rectory, quietly well dressed. Now his face was thoroughly disfigured, his clothes torn and discoloured with blood.

On the Wednesday following the making of statements by these three women, a fourth woman arrived from their home village in a near-hysterical state. She had covered the 40 miles on foot, and she was related to one of the three. She pleaded with them not to return home. Her story was that their Chief would do them grave harm if they did return, as he had been

told by the police that these three women were trying to get him arrested. The women left the district, and there the whole matter rests.

The refugees who left the district, via our Rectory were a fraction of the total. Many left by less obvious routes, seeking shelter in Bechuanaland or, more precariously, on the Reef. When we went into the Protectorate to gain an inkling of the situation, an official there told me that Bafurutse were scattered from the border to the desert. We saw some: others, we were told, were in hiding in the hills, fearing that they might be returned to the Union.

By mid-January some of our congregations had melted away almost to nothing. But at least the fugitives were having a rest. The ones who stayed were the ones who paid.

On January 24th four people were shot dead and others wounded in the village of Gopane. The shooting took place in the morning, and shortly afterwards one of the villagers put through a telephone call to me. I could hardly understand his frenzied babble, and he rang off abruptly. So we went, and as we were on the point of leaving the village we met, inevitably, a large party of police, to whom, by then, we were well known. We spent forty minutes surrounded by sten guns, having inane questions barked at us about who we were, where we came from, what we were doing, where our identity cards were. A blustering performance. The man who had put through the call to us was subsequently beaten up in the presence of the police, and his sister told us that she paid £30 to have the assault called off.

We were not again treated to sten gun drill; but we did again encounter the tough manner. On one occasion we were entering another village (Leeuwfontein) when the car was stopped at a police camp. We watched policemen carving up an ox—a gift, perhaps, from a 'loyal' Chief who had in turn 'fined' it out of a villager? A sergeant detached himself idly and came over to us: "You'll have to clear out at once."

"Why?"

"The Chief doesn't want your Church here."

"I've a congregation to care for, whatever the Chief may want." The sergeant fetched the Chief who repeated his piece. I repeated my piece and then asked for the officer in charge. I was taken to him.

"Am I being forbidden entry here?" I asked.

"I'm not forbidding you."

"Well, who is then?" The officer turned to the Chief. "Look, Chief, write that letter to the Native Commissioner and then we shall see what happens. We can't tell this priest not to go in." So we went in, passing people from the next village herded into a cattle kraal. Coming out we gave lifts to some who had by then been released. And they all had bruises and cuts on their faces.

Finally, a new technique was evolved. One Sunday, in Gopane, we found a police van with armed police inside, back and front, accompanying us wherever we went. They said nothing and did nothing—they just rode with us until we left. That was the end of any pastoral work in Gopane, as it did not take us long to recognize that the most brave Anglican would not be over-eager, in a village seething with fear, to receive benefit of clergy together with five police. Furthermore, the last man whom we visited was forthwith, on Sunday, taken by the police to the Chief and fined £40 for what was called a "Congress offence".

Earlier on the same day we had been chased by a police car, hooting all the way, down a road with a sixty foot sheer drop on the off-side—not the side on which the police seemed desirous of passing. I did not stop until I reached the bottom, when I was asked, to my utter astonishment, if I had seen a large green bus anywhere! Despite my inability to produce one, the interior of the parish car was inspected, and then we were allowed to go on. The police car turned back, questing no doubt for the large green bus which has not yet been found.

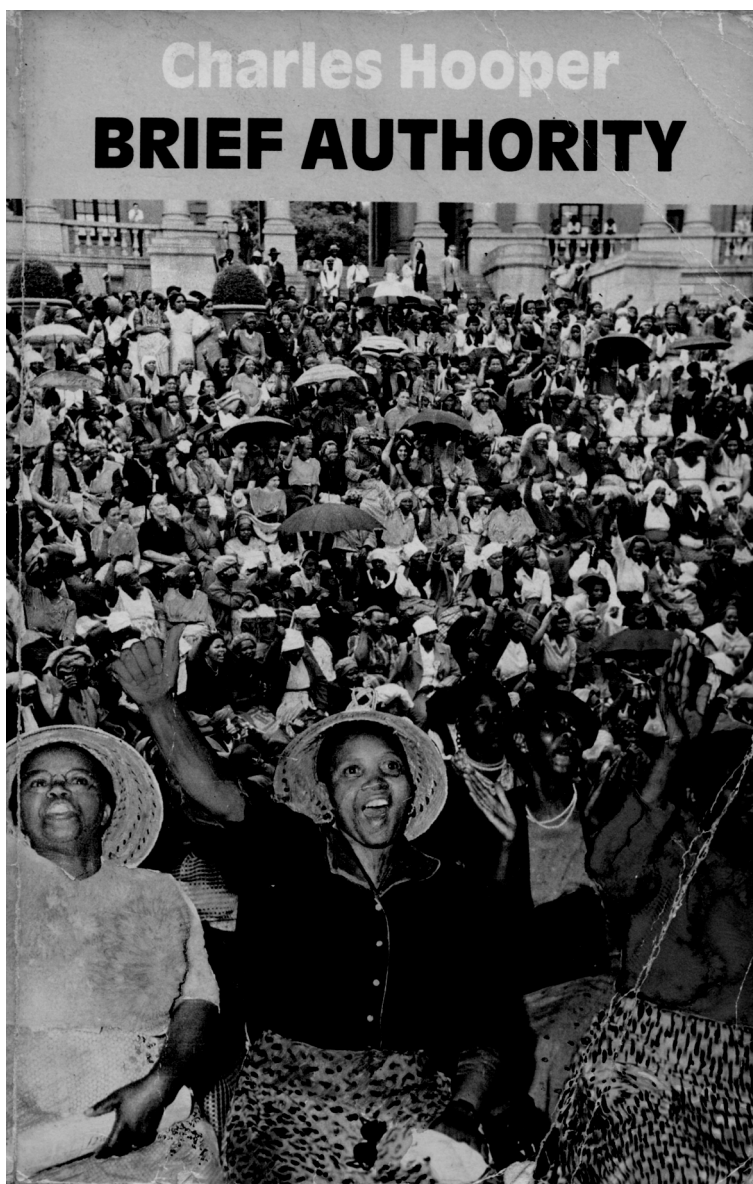
Even at home, in Zeerust, well out of the Reserves, the ordinary day to day transactions of Church life were drastically inhibited. The Rectory stands directly opposite the large, imposing buildings of the Native Affairs Department; between the two properties there is nothing but a road and a low wire fence. Each morning we would see our familiar informer taking up his watch on the Rectory, to be relieved at intervals during the day by other 'loiterers', and then ending his day affecting to read a newspaper—in pitch darkness. For teachers, clerks, African policemen, a call to the Rectory meant interrogation afterwards—questions to which the real reply that the call was made to pay rent, arrange a baptism, ask advice, discuss a premature pregnancy, was not acceptable. In the end much of our ordinary out of Church work was done in the late even-

ings. So great was the fear of the authorities that, during the day, except at times of worship, the most inoffensive and unpolitical of Anglicans tended to keep well clear of the Rectory. By the time we were banned, the routine of the Rectory had changed utterly: the business we dealt with was, for us, urgent, often grim, nearly always hurried, and quite unending. The days of impromptu parties with the Mothers Union, of play-production for the children, of vigorous and uninhibited unrehearsed 'concerts' round the Rectory tap, had given place to days that began before dawn with trouble, and ended after sunset with more trouble.

For a year now we have had a question put to us, by our own people, by visiting overseas journalists, by idly curious fellow South Africans: "What is going to happen? Where will all this end?" I do not know. But it is clear that the Zeerust district has become in some way a testing ground for new techniques. The police have learned, and taught, a good deal there in a year. Some Chiefs have learned new tricks, and a totally new method of rule; others cling with admirable determination to the old method, conscious for the first time of its value. The people have learned on a new scale the meaning of fear. I do not presume to predict the outcome, but of this I am certain: where a year ago there was a belief in peace and law, now there is hope only of an eventual dénouement which will have to be catastrophic, perhaps for rulers and ruled alike\*.

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\* Those who are unfamiliar with the background to Rev. Hooper's experiences are referred to, "Zeerust—A Profile of Resistance" by James Fairbairn, in AFRICA SOUTH, Vol. II, No. 3.



Phyllis Naidoo  
Durban  
23/10/2009