



HUGH LEWIN

**ARREST AND
INTERROGATION**

**AN EXCERPT FROM
BANDIET OUT OF JAIL
(SEVEN YEARS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN PRISON)**

ColdType




HUGH LEWIN

**ARREST AND
INTERROGATION**

AN EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK
BANDIET OUT OF JAIL

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(This excerpt consists of the Introduction, Chapter Nine
and two poems from the book)



Illustrations By Harold 'Jock' Strachan,
twice a fellow 'bandiet' with Lewin in Pretoria.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



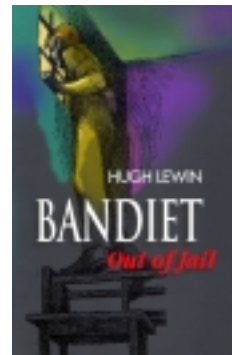
HUGH LEWIN was born in 1939 in Lydenburg, South Africa, of English missionary parents. After graduating from Rhodes University, he began his journalistic career at the *Natal Witness* in Pietermaritzburg, before working with *Drum* magazine and *Golden City Post* in Johannesburg.

In July 1964 he was held under the country's 90-day detention law and later sentenced, with other members of the African Resistance Movement, to seven years' imprisonment for protest sabotage activities against apartheid. He served the full term in Pretoria and left South Africa on a 'permanent departure permit' in December 1971. He spent 10 years in exile in London, followed by another ten years in Zimbabwe, before finally being allowed to return home at the end of 1992. He became director of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in Johannesburg and was a member of the Human Rights Violations Committee of the South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission. He now works as a freelance media trainer.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Bandiet was first published in London in the mid-70s. Hailed as a classic work of South African prison literature, it remained banned in South Africa for many years. *Bandiet Out Of Jail* republishes the full text of the original *Bandiet: Seven Years in a South African Prison* with the addition of new stories that were excluded from the original. The new book also brings together previously unpublished poems.

This excerpt, which marks the 40th anniversary of Lewin's detention and imprisonment, consists of *Arrest & Interrogation*, the first chapter of the original *Bandiet*, together with later addition, *Phone Call* and two poems, *Touch* and *Three Friends*.



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FOREWORD

By Archbishop Desmond Tutu

QUITE OFTEN in the public hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission I remarked that the revelations of a spirit of forgiveness led us into the presence of something holy. I used to say that we were standing on holy ground and should metaphorically remove our shoes. In South Africa we are blessed by some truly remarkable people of all races, and each one is a person of extraordinary nobility of spirit. Many were involved in the struggle against apartheid and they paid a very heavy price for that involvement.

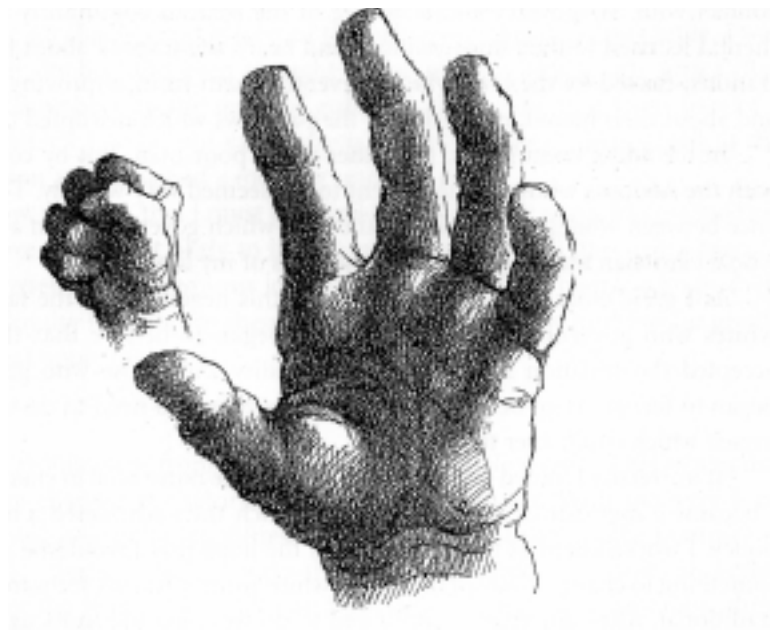
One such is Hugh Lewin, whose passionate commitment to justice and freedom led him to oppose injustice and oppression with every fibre of his being. For this he paid a heavy price: seven and a half years of incarceration and twenty-one years in exile. This book describes what happened to him and his associates in apartheid's jails and his encounters with the dreaded Security Branch. Some readers might feel that he is exaggerating when describing the methods of the police, that torture was rare, indulged in only by what some political leaders were to tell the TRC were 'bad apples' the exceptions in a Force that otherwise behaved impeccably.

Hugh Lewin went through sheer hell and emerged, not devastated, not broken, and not consumed with bitterness or a lust for revenge. He amazed, he humbled with his gentleness, his generosity of spirit, his willingness to forgive, when he could have been otherwise, and made a telling contribution to the work of the TRC as a member of its Human Rights Violations Committee. He is endowed with ubuntu – humanness, the very essence of being human. He reveals another quality of many who suffered: a resilience that prevented him and his fellow 'politicals' from going to pieces when they had the stuffing knocked out of them. Instead, they staged plays and found ways to beat the system and to laugh, even at themselves.

Enriched by Hugh's reflections on postapartheid South Africa, this book reveals again his way with words. He writes like a journalist who is a poet. Or should that be the other way round? And his gentle wry humour is a bonus.

This deeply moving account reminds us where we come from and how high a price has been paid for our freedom. Let us cherish it.

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ACCUSED No. 2 states: 'My lord, I am twenty-four years old.

'I was born in Lydenburg, in the Eastern Transvaal, where my father was the Anglican parish priest. When I was one, my father was transferred to Irene, near Pretoria, where he became parish priest and chaplain to the Irene Homes.

'When I was eight, I was sent as a boarder to St John's College, an Anglican private school in Johannesburg. I matriculated there in 1956, then stayed on at school for a post-matric year in preparation for my studies at university.

'I wanted to become a priest, and arrangements were made for me to go first to Rhodes University and then to a theological college in England.

'I completed my B.A. at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, in 1960 but I felt then that I was not yet equipped to face the rigours and demands of the priesthood, so I postponed my trip to England. My father, my lord, was a gentle and loving man with whom I had a close and warm relationship until he died, aged eighty, in 1963. He brought me up to believe that all men, rich or poor, should be respected and loved as creatures of God. I have always believed, and still do believe, that all men are equal in the eyes of God. This belief was a strong factor in my decision to commit sabotage.

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‘During my last years at school I spent a number of Sundays as a guest of Father Trevor Huddleston and the other fathers of the Community of the Resurrection in Sophiatown. Here, for the first time, I was brought into direct contact with the poverty and suffering of the African community that lived there. I listened to their conversations and heard them speak about their frustrations, caused by the laws which prevented them from improving their lot, and about their hatred, especially for the pass laws which disrupted their lives.

‘In the white community, my father was a poor man. But by comparison with the Africans whose homes I went to, he seemed very wealthy. This difference between whites and blacks set the laws which governed them against the whole Christian teaching which was the basis of my life.

‘As I grew older I began to believe that this negation was the fault of the whites who governed the country. I also began to believe that those who accepted the situation shared the responsibility with those who governed. I began to feel guilty of being white and I felt a powerful need to do something myself which could alter the situation.

‘At university I joined organizations which were non-racial in character, and I became a member of the Liberal Party which then advocated a non-racial policy. I worked hard at these activities in the hope that I would be able to do something to change a way of life which white South Africans seem to regard as traditional. After university I continued to do what I could to focus attention on the laws which I felt prevented Africans from living a full and proper life. But my efforts seemed puny and hopeless. It seemed that nothing would awaken the whites. At about this time I was approached by a friend who asked me to become a member of the “National Committee for Liberation”, a secret sabotage group. My lord, I was terrified. Instinctively I was opposed to any form of violence and I knew that I was not suitable to the active role I was being asked to play. In spite of this, I decided to join.

‘Two factors in particular influenced me in making this decision. I was told that the N.C.L. was a small group, consisting largely of young people, who wanted to make a demonstration of their protest, in the hope that by such demonstrations attention would be focused on the living conditions of the blacks. My previous attempt to do this had been completely ineffective. I thought that sabotage might

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shock the whites into an awareness of the conditions under which the blacks were living and, in due time, change the system.

‘Secondly, I was told that the sabotage would be committed only against installations such as pylons, which were to be selected in a way which would ensure that the explosions would not endanger human life. The motive was to shock, not to injure. This, perhaps wrongly, I was able to reconcile with my conscience. So, with some trepidation, I joined the organization. I was a member of the N.C.L. - later called the ARM, African Resistance Movement - for about eighteen months. Our efforts were disorganized, our actions were sporadic. During that time I personally participated in three acts of sabotage. Another five acts were committed by other members of the organization, but there were no changes and it seemed that what we were doing was futile. I was filled with doubts, and even thought of leaving my own South Africa. But always I came back to the sense of guilt and the feeling that I was part of a problem which I could not escape from by running away. So I stayed in the organization and remained a member until my arrest.

‘I know, my lord, that I must go to jail for what I have done. I know too that what I have said is not likely to lighten my sentence, but I have felt a need to explain myself not only to your lordship but also to those people who by their love and loyalty have shown their trust in me. I thank your lordship for granting me that opportunity.’

I MADE that statement from the dock in the trial in November 1964 when four of us were charged in Pretoria under the Sabotage Act. With me were Fred Prager, a widower in his late fifties, formerly married to one of the founders of the N.C.L.; Baruch Hirson, forty-three-year-old physics lecturer, an actual founder of the N.C.L.; and Raymond Eisenstein, economics journalist, three years older than me. Fred got off. The other three of us changed our pleas to guilty in the face of incontrovertible evidence against us. We knew that the Sabotage Act carried a mandatory minimum sentence of five years. Baruch got nine years. Raymond and I got seven years each.

By the time we were sentenced we had already been in jail for five months, three months in solitary detention, two months awaiting trial.

Now I have finished my seven and a half years in prison for sabotage. Being a

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political prisoner, I got no remission; I served the full seven-year sentence. I was twenty-four when I went in. I flew out of South Africa on my thirty-second birthday, having been given four days after my release in which to leave the country or be put under twenty-four-hour house arrest.

Now I have finished my seven and a half years as a bandiet and I am not sorry. I am glad it's finished. I am also glad that I have been through it. Just as, at my trial, I could not apologize for the actions which had got me into the box, so too now I cannot regret that this has happened to me.

I can claim neither uniqueness nor courage. What happened to me could happen to anybody and it will, I am sure, happen to a lot more people. That will be good: it was only as a prisoner - as a bandiet in a South African jail - that I could begin to realize what life is like for most South Africans. I was white. I had to go inside to know what it's like to be black. I also spent eight months among ordinary criminals in a maximum security jail. the hanging jail. I think that any person, in any society, should know what it is like to live in a hanging jail.

That is why I write these things. Yet I hesitate to write anything about what I have experienced - not because it worries me, nor because I think it unimportant, but because it may give satisfaction to men like Aucamp and Swanepoel. They are the sort of men who wield power in South Africa today and they are men who like hearing about themselves.

Aucamp, was the man responsible for the treatment of political prisoners. 'I don't care,' he once said, 'if people overseas know I'm in charge. I'm big enough to take it.' Aucamp will like to know that people outside South Africa know he was in charge of the politicals. That, he will think, is fame. (His other claim to fame was being manager of the Pretoria Prison rugby football club.)

Swanepoel will also like hearing about himself. Swanepoel was Chief Interrogator of the South African Security Police. He was the man who was in charge of interrogating political detainees. While Swanepoel was in charge of interrogating detainees, at least nineteen people died in detention.

I know Swanepoel will laugh when he reads that. I know he will laugh when he reads that I say that, a fortnight after I first met him, he swore he would kill me. Swanepoel will get satisfaction from that, knowing that someone is writing about him and describing the fear he generates in the people he is interrogating.

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But I must write this in spite of Aucamp and Swanepoel and their pleasure - because they are not the only people who are South Africans and they are the least important of the people I met during seven years as a bandiet. I must write this because of men like Bram Fischer, former Q.C., now political bandiet for life. And Denis Goldberg, engineer, sentenced to life imprisonment at the age of thirty-one. And Dave Kitson, sentenced to twenty years. And the others in Pretoria. And the others, worse off because they are not white, on Robben Island. All bandiete, with a long time ahead of them as bandiete, because they believe in a decent society and were prepared to act on their belief.

I never thought that I would be in a position to do this. I never thought that I would go to jail. I was white, living in the nice easy white society, and even when I started to do most un-white sorts of things, like blowing up pylons, it was possible to slip back into the white suburban ways which provided a useful screen against detection - and a screen against unwholesome reality. For so long it had always happened to them, the blacks, and had never directly affected us, the whites, never in an inescapable way. It would never happen to me, I thought.

The sabotage organization I joined was a small multi-racial group made up largely of people who were not widely known as being politically active. By the time I was approached to join the group in November 1962 - then still called the National Committee for Liberation - the organizational structure had been fixed for a couple of years, centring around a dozen or so activists in Johannesburg and a slightly larger group in Cape Town. There was also a handful of people in Port Elizabeth and Durban. I doubt if there were ever more than fifty people actively involved. What I saw of the structure (not much) suggested an informal rather than rigid hierarchy, reflecting the ideologically imprecise nature of the N.C.L.: the orientation was, broadly, socialist, ranging from some members who were dissident communists through to those of us who had been members of the Liberal Party and who had become disenchanted with the Liberals' insistence on passive non-violent protest.

The group seemed bound together by a desire for action and by some initial successes, particularly a large haul of dynamite from a coal-mine store and a spectacular toppling of power pylons near Johannesburg. We were amateurs and it is easy, looking back now, to ridicule the group, to think of it solely as a small group

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attempting sabotage activities as a counterpart to the larger and more widespread activities of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the military arm of the African National Congress. But even in the relatively short time I was a member, the N.C.L. - or, as we called it after the Rivonia trial, the ARM, African Resistance Movement - achieved fair success in terms of the group's objectives: there were at least half a dozen sabotage attacks on pylons, railway signal cables or power standards. These attacks were, on two occasions, coordinated between Johannesburg and Cape Town, giving the appearance of a larger organisation than was actually the case. In addition, there were Africans involved in our group in Johannesburg and it was thus possible - in fact necessary, because of the apartheid society - to hit targets both in white and black areas. We would meet, train and construct our equipment together, then work apart. The results again gave the impression of a larger organization than actually existed.

And the N.C.L./ARM – despite itself - spawned the one cataclysmic act of South African sabotage: the petrol bomb placed in the crowded concourse of Johannesburg Station on 24 July 1964 by John Harris. That station bomb – which killed one and severely injured others, and led to John Harris being hanged, was an ironic end to ARM activities: it shattered the ARM policy of avoiding harm to people, and it happened a fortnight after the ARM had effectively ceased to exist. When John's bomb went off, most of the ARM members were either out of the country, or in detention.

The beginning of the end was on 4 July 1964 when the police carried out raids throughout the country, searching the homes of many Left sympathizers or assumed sympathizers. Among others, they picked up several members of Umkhonto who had managed to evade the earlier net which had resulted in the Rivonia trial. Also, by chance almost, they picked up 'Mark' in Cape Town. He had been president of the National Union of Students and he was an active member of the Liberal Party. He was raided along with many other similar people – all of them possible sympathizers of underground sabotage groups, among whose papers might have been some tenuous references which could lead to more tangible links. Unhidden in Mark's flat, they found virtually the entire history of the N.C.L. displayed in documents carefully kept by him. The police (so they admitted later, when using the documents as effective levers for interrogation) were most sur-

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prised at their sudden discovery.

At the time, those of us in Johannesburg knew only that Mark had been detained. There were suggestions in the papers that others had been held too. Four days after his arrest – towards midnight on 8 July 1964 – one of our Johannesburg group whom I knew only as ‘Kate’ contacted me and indicated that there was an emergency. I went out to meet Kate and ‘Herbert’, her husband, and found them already packed and ready to set off by motorbike for the border. They reported that ‘Luke’ had arrived from Cape Town having dodged the Special Branch there; that he reported that Mark was talking; and that the balloon was up. We must go, quickly. Out. The two of them on their motorbike were fine because they had a British passport and could make it across the border into Bechuanaland. But Luke had no papers. He would have to go with ‘Diane’, the woman who had originally recruited me and with whom I had searched out a safe route into Swaziland. They had left Luke waiting near their cottage, so I drove back there, picked him up in my car, then headed out to Diane’s place, a fair distance out of town. We woke her at about two in the morning and told her, with her two kids asleep, that it was time to go.

A cool girl, Diane. She was up immediately, busy with useful things like coffee and biscuits – and did any of us have enough spare cash? She would leave with Luke and her kids at five; Kate and Herbert could leave at six. What was I going to do? We needed ready cash and I said I would return to town quickly and pick up what I could collect from friends. Time enough when I got back to decide finally what I would do. Immediately there was the need for cash, and the need to phone another friend to come and lock up Diane’s house once we’d all left, and the need to find someone to phone Herbert’s boss in the morning to say he was sick and so give them an extra few hours to reach the border properly, and the need for someone to phone ‘Tom’ and tell him to leave.

All the things to do immediately – which conveniently prevented me making the decision I had never thought I would have to make – whether to go or stay. I didn’t want to decide. There were enough things, as we drank Diane’s coffee at 2.30 in the morning, enough to keep us talking and planning without my deciding what I didn’t want to decide. There was, for instance, Mark. Luke was adamant: he was talking, and talking a great deal; the Branch had been only a step behind Luke at

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every turn; he had escaped from Cape Town by a combination of luck and ridiculous daring. Mark was talking and talking fast – and nobody was in a better position to talk about the N.C.L. than Mark. He had, over a couple of years and through very hard work, established himself as national organizing secretary. He had tremendous energy and enthusiasm. He had also made a point always of insisting more than most on the constant need for security; all records and documents should be destroyed immediately they were done with, and nobody should press to know the actual identity of members of the organization. But Mark in fact knew more members of the organization than any of us. And he had, it seemed – in contravention of his own rules – become archivist.

Driving back to town in search of the cash we should have had permanently ready, I tried to come to terms with the fact of Mark talking. He was the one who had drawn up a long document on the effects of detention, on the effects of interrogation and how best to withstand the attempts of the interrogators to make you talk. Four days since he had been arrested, and now he was talking.

My concern wasn't that he had drawn up the document on interrogation. It was that he was a close friend. He had been best man at my wedding confirmation of a friendship stretching back over not many years but years of frequent contact and lively comradeship. He had been largely responsible for my recruitment to the N.C.L. If he was talking, the first person he would talk about in Johannesburg was me. But could he betray so close a friend?

Everybody talks, said Diane that night when she was being so practical and getting everybody organized to get out. Nobody doesn't talk, and talk about everything. She said she had just read an article by a team of psychologists studying the whole question, and everybody talks, she said. If they get you, you'll take some time you'll talk.

By the time I got back to her place after trying fruitlessly to raise some cash it must have been about 5 a.m. by then Diane had gone, taking her kids and Luke, heading for the Swaziland border by the route she and I had discovered months before, where you didn't need a passport. If I had gone that way, I felt, I would have been making myself a prisoner inside Swaziland, unable to get out anywhere. (Dennis Brutus had tried to get out that way only a year before and he had ended up on Robben Island, with a bullet in his gut.)

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If I was to go at all it would be with Kate and Herbert, via the Bechuanaland (Botswana) border. We discussed the possibility: ditch their bike and take my car, let me off before the border to walk across while they went through with their passports. It would have been easy. It would have been the natural thing to do in terms of my thoughts during the previous few months: that we were achieving nothing and that, with my marriage on the rocks and my personal life in a mess, the place for me was outside somewhere else starting a new life in something else. But when it came to trying, to decide that early morning about 5.30 on the morning of 9 July 1964 I couldn't decide. I felt nothing dramatic in the sense of choosing between freedom and imprisonment. I felt merely that I didn't want to leave. I know I was influenced by a distinct feeling of loyalty to Mark, a sort of doublethink which accepted that he was talking but which made me want to think that he wouldn't talk about me, so made me want to stay behind to see whether this was so or not a feeling that someone, especially me, should stay behind to be with him if everybody else was leaving. Perhaps, by then, I was too tired to decide anything. All I know is that I did not want to leave.

Then Herbert reminded me that it would help if someone phoned his boss and said he was sick that morning. And someone must phone Tom. I stayed to do the phoning.

I'm not sorry, after all, that I did.

I LEFT Kate and Herbert at Diane's place, resting before they set off for the border. It was already near sunrise, there seemed little point in returning home for sleep and there was time still before I went to work to contact John Harris again. John was the friend whom Herbert and I had contacted earlier in case we were picked up. Our arrangement had been that John (who had thus far played a very minor role in the organization) would take over from us and continue working with Diane. That had been the arrangement, but now Diane was on her way out, Herbert was on his way out, and I wanted to let John know the latest. I woke them about six and I remember lying on their bed while Anne fed the baby and I felt tired and sleepy, explaining what had happened during the night, about Luke's arrival and about Mark and his talking and the fact that I didn't want to leave and that Diane was leaving. Diane was leaving and that, it seemed, put an end to any

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previous plans we had made about continuing things. We discussed the possibility of John getting in touch with my flatmate, 'Ernest' who had also become peripherally involved but we discussed nothing definite about anything that could be done. Nothing at that time of the day and at that stage of collapse seemed possible only the fact that everyone else had gone, that it was light again and that it might help if I took two pep pills with the coffee Anne made.

Then I drove back to my flat, shaved, changed for work and drove to the office, feeling very tired and wondering what would happen. Ernest was away on holiday which meant, as he was also a sub-editor with me on the newspaper Post, that I had more work than usual to do that Thursday morning. I also had some urgent phone calls to make: I phoned Herbert's boss to say he was ill that day (an interesting call for me because it had involved my having to use Herbert's real name for the first time and I found it odd replying to him by a totally strange name after knowing him familiarly for so long as 'Herbert'). I tried to phone 'Tom', the person I had worked with a great deal and got to know as Raymond Eisenstein, a financial reporter with French/Polish origins. If I could contact him I knew he could contact 'Eric' the other person I had met often but whom I did not know personally. Tom and Eric had to be warned. I couldn't get Tom/Raymond and left a message for him to phone me. I also phoned Jill, the girlfriend whom I'd left the previous evening with a joking request that, if I were picked up, she would look after me while I was inside. Of course, she had said, laughing, not knowing that I was serious. I wondered, speaking to Jill that morning, whether I would speak to her again.

Tom had not phoned back – it was still fairly early, about 10:30 – when I looked across the office and saw two men in raincoats talking to the secretary at the main door. She nodded towards me and they came. I don't remember their faces at all. I don't remember whether they had hats even. I remember only that they had raincoats, not overcoats, and they said was I Lewin and would I come with them. I said I was very busy, could I finish what I was doing? No, they said, please come now. So I went across to the editor's office they followed quickly and opened the door and said I've got to go, I'm sorry and he looked up, terrified I thought, his eyes large and disowning, nodding and shaking his head and seeming to need to be comforted. I didn't feel like comforting him. I thought perhaps he would try comforting me but I didn't want that either because I didn't want to feel that I needed to

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be comforted. There were the two men in their raincoats and there was me, going with them, and I didn't have time or energy to think what it was that I was feeling. Come, they said, and I took my coat and nodded to The assistant editor and smiled at the secretary and went downstairs to their car, sitting between them, looking up at the building and noticing for the first time that there was a huge dirty ugly plateglass window on the ground floor which was filled with posters I had never seen before. Then the secretary came running out of the building and asked for the keys to my car, in case they needed to move it, and I was struck by her sense of practicality. She smiled and waved as we drove off. I felt cramped, sitting between them on the front seat of the car, not talking.

They drove straight to my flat where there was another car, full of Special Branch men in raincoats, with a tall large man in charge, with a face like a bloodhound and a scraggy voice. Was I Lewin? Was this my flat? Yes, and would you like to come in? Would you all like some tea? which gave me something to do while they pawed through the books and the files and letters and filing cabinet, muttering to each other and saying nothing to me, drinking my tea and watching that I didn't wander on to the balcony or slip into the kitchen. Polite, in a surly sort of way. I had expected it too long to be angry and I knew there was nothing for them to find that could be incriminating. I felt strong, knowing the innocence of the contents of my flat. They took a couple of things: a banned book by Patrick Duncan, a file of notes I was preparing for a Liberal Party document on Rule by Intimidation in South Africa, and a chart of figures from my newspaper giving lettercounts for different sizes of type. They took me to the Greys, Special Branch headquarters, which I had visited only once before when negotiating press passes for some of our African reporters. They had hardly talked to me at the flat, only a few remarks from the tall scraggy senior officer with ears and jowls like a bloodhound. They spoke little on the way to the Greys and there even less. Just Come In here, into an empty office at the top of the building, with not many people actively in sight in any of the other offices, and not much attention being paid to me by anybody. I was left in the office with a young officer in civvies. We chatted perfunctorily, me asking him about his training, how long in service, did he like it, where was he stationed? He replied, briefly, and we sat looking at each other, waiting. I felt relaxed. Tired too. Nobody seemed in much of a hurry about anything.

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Then a new tall man with a distinct air of authority came in. 'Kom/Come,' he said, and led me into another office down the passage.

There I met Captain Swanepoel. I had already heard of him through a number of stories which had come to our paper in the preceding months (some of them were published) arising out of the interrogation of detainees and the accusations of assaults and torture by the police. Swanepoel had been widely referred to as the chief interrogator and one witness had testified about being aggressively questioned by a man with the neck and shoulders of a bull and a bright red face, Mr Swanepoel.

I was taken into the office down the passage and presented to a man sitting behind a large desk: a man with a boozy red face, the neck and shoulders of a bull, and sharp eyes. Captain Swanepoel, reading from a sheaf of papers, and shouting up at me. 'We know, Lewin, that you are a member of the regional High Command .. .' (and suddenly my initial terror faded, because we had never used such terminology and had no High Command as such, and I found myself almost smiling at the growling man) 'of the ARM, once called the N.CL. . . .' (I stopped wanting to smile) ' . . . and we know all about you and you're going to tell us all about you . . .' the a-1-1 drawn out into a roll – and all about everybody else in the ARM and the N.C.L.'

My mouth felt dry. 'I would like' – it came in a gulp – 'to see my lawyer first.'

Swanepoel laughed. Looking round at his attendant lieutenant, his cheeks swelling round and red, he closed his eyes and laughed. 'A lawyer! This, man, is 90 days and you'll never see a lawyer. And you'll talk.'

I said – dry-mouthed, feeling lonely – that I wanted a lawyer and that I disapproved of the 90-day detention law. Swanepoel laughed a second time and didn't need to look around to muster more loud laughs from the rest of them. 'This is 90-days' – he was shouting again – 'and you'll talk! Waving a sheaf of papers at me as I was pulled away from the table by two of the lieutenants and led out of the office. I got to know these two well: Lieutenants Viktor and van der Merwe, always together with me, working as a pair, never apart. They took me off in their car (always a coupe), with me pushed into the back while they sat in front guarding the doors) and booked me into a police cell at Jeppe police station where a young police sergeant complained that they hadn't room there for detainees and that they

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hadn't time to look after them. The Special Branch lieutenants laughed and pushed me towards my first sight of a real cell – brown dark walls and a black floor, and a heavy grid over the barred window with a pile of dark felt mats on the floor and a seeping four gallon tin in the corner. Then, without a pause: 'Kom, nou gaan jy praat/Come, now you're going to talk.' And they led me off, back to the car, into the back, off again to the Greys.

It was late afternoon, on 9 July 1964. I was tired and beginning to regret my coffee-only breakfast. They offered me nothing to eat. They took me back to the Greys and up to the sixth floor, into an office at the end of the passage: a room large enough to take three desks pushed together, and an assortment of office chairs, and two windows with thin tatty calico curtains which van der Merwe pulled across the windows, barely keeping out the disappearing sun.

'Stand,' they said, 'stand there' – and pointed to the open floor in front of a steel-filing cabinet. Four of them at the start: Lieutenant Viktor, Lieutenant van der Merwe, another lieutenant with no teeth, and their captain, Swanepoel. Swanepoel came in last, when I was already perched on my spot in front of the cabinet. He brought with him a picnic basket, a nice wicker basket with thermos and packaged sandwiches and fresh fruit. Plus the sheaf of papers I had seen before. He was businesslike, with his picnic basket, not shouting now, rubbing his pudgy hands and smiling – right, let's go. Viktor and van der Merwe paced round me, long loping paces round and round, round the desk and up to me – talk, you're going to talk – then away, then back, around and around, while I stood on my spot.

There was no question of leaving my spot, no question of sitting down. Once I moved backwards towards the cabinet, slowly edging backwards till I could feel the relief of the steel, cold against my back. They waited a brief moment then shouted, pounced forward – 'stand there' – and drew a small circle with chalk on the floor, away from the steel support. I couldn't think at all of sitting down, now with the four of them there (and two more reinforcements during the night), high up above the distant almost soundless traffic, four then six of them. I felt very alone and small and weak, unbrave. No idea ever of trying to sit down and provoking their rage. Only the long intense concentration on muscles in legs and ankles, straining, wanting to burst and crack, and a tense ache beginning in the ankles and creeping up the legs, thighs, digging into my back and shoulders. If only I could

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lean forward, creak out of the upright standing standing and release the ache, stop the pain. But all I could do was ease off one leg to the other, rocking slowly, gently, trying to think the pain away, to concentrate on the legs and the ankles and thighs, feel them straining to burst; trying to think away the voices pressing in, persistent – you're going to talk, talk – gnawing into the pain, stalking round and round, and the window opposite with its tatty small curtain (who could have thought to put such a stupid piece of curtain up in the window?) faded and the sun went and the lights below shot up in flickers, and the voices kept pressing in, pressing persistent nagging nagging. I thought at first to keep absolutely silent, beyond giving my name and address and repeating my demand for a lawyer. They laughed and taunted: We know all about you – and they began telling me all about myself, precisely so. It was eerie. They knew all about my involvement in the N.C.L.: they knew when I joined and what I did; they knew about the meetings I had attended in Cape Town (including one I had forgotten about); and they knew a considerable amount about my private life, my marriage, my divorce, my newspaper work. They knew it all. 'Why stay silent when the others are talking?' taunted Swanepoel. 'Look how they're talking. You're on your own now, aren't you? On your own. All for one now, hey. Why shut up when they don't? All for one.'

I denied it all. They laughed. I asked again for a lawyer and they laughed. Dipping into his picnic basket, Swanepoel laughed and read from the papers in front of him. We know it all, he said and he seemed indeed to know it all, all about me. His papers were telex messages and they could have come only from Cape Town only from Mark. Only Mark could have known the details about me that Swanepoel was repeating, rolling them over his tongue and laughing up at me: 'We know all about you, Lewin.' Mark was talking. We'd known he was talking the night before. I had known it all along and I had wondered whether he would talk about me, his closest friend in Johannesburg. Now I knew: he was talking and he was telling them all about me. Diane was right, I thought, standing there on my spot: everybody talks in the end. I wasn't surprised. I don't remember, at that stage, feeling even angry about it. He was talking and the first person he'd talk about in Johannesburg was me. That was natural, of course. I felt tired, and the knowledge that he was talking added to the tiredness, seemed to add a physical weight, pressing down on my ankles and legs. I felt no mental strain, no emotional pain because

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he was talking: only an added physical strain.

What mattered was the ache stretching across my back and my legs and ankles. That was what mattered. So it didn't matter, it seemed, I answered the simple obvious questions about myself. They knew all about me and my involvement. Well, I wouldn't admit to the involvement but what was the point of keeping silent on the obvious things. If I kept quiet it would seem I was admitting my guilt. So when Viktor stalked around me for what seemed the hundredth time (the window opposite was dark, the street noises hushed I reckoned it was nearing midnight) and asked: 'How old are you?' I replied 'Twentyfour.'

He went easily on: 'Where at school?

'St John's, Johannesburg.'

'University?

'Rhodes, Grahamstown.'

'Is that where you joined N.U.S.A.S. [National Union of South African Students]?

'Yes, of course!

'Is that where you met Mark?

No, enough, I must stay silent and my silence itself was an admission.

Swanepoel said: 'You can't stop there we know you know Mark' and, of course, he was right. What was the point of denying knowing the man who everybody knew had been best man at my wedding?

So 'Yes, I know him and I met him while I was at Rhodes University! 'Seen him lately?' 'Occasionally.' 'On ARM business, hey?'

Dangerous again, so silence, admmissive silence.

Swanepoel laughed: 'He says the last time you saw him was recently and that was on ARM business!

'He's a liar,' I say, and they all laugh and flutter the sheafs of telexes at me.

'It's all here, all here, so why not tell us straight away? You're going to talk sometime we've got lots of time – so why make it difficult for yourself? Talk now and make it easier for yourself, easier for us too. We've got all the time in the world,' said Swanepoel, pouring a steaming cup of coffee from his flask.

He sat there, sipping the cup of coffee, about sixteen hours since I drank my last cup of coffee, and his sips sent the aches in my legs tearing round to my stomach,

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desperate for a sip of coffee, and a smoke, aching for nourishment, for a moment's relief, aching.

'Have some coffee,' said Swanepoel and I was given a cup not allowed out of my chalk circle, but given a cup of coffee and with it a cigarette, and my whole body seemed to respond, stroked warm and comfortable, and the menace seemed to slip away as the ache began to leave the stomach and the smoke seeped down giving strength to my legs and ankles, pushing up how my back and easing the strain.

'Who's Tom? Who's Eric?'

It's dangerous to be lulled into their net. Viktor took away the coffee cup as I finished the smoke. 'Who,' he snapped, 'is Tom? Who's Eric?'

I'd been dreading that. It had seemed not to matter so much with Mark telling them about me, just a matter of him and me, old friends, involving nobody else. Ever since I'd been picked up I'd been trying to work out how long the others would need to make it across the border: Diane and Luke on their way to Swaziland, that wouldn't need much, but Kate and Herbert on their motorbike, much longer, a whole day, perhaps longer. So I had to hold out for that at least. But there were also the others who hadn't gone and whom I hadn't contacted – Tom, whom I knew, and Eric whom I didn't know. I didn't want to talk of them. I'd hoped they wouldn't come up at all. But now, after the midnight coffee and the smoke, they snapped: 'Who's Tom and Eric?'

'I don't know,' I said, feeling afraid because I was lying and feeling tired, slipping, yet feeling secure too because I didn't actually know Eric the one successful piece of security gave me support, lifting itself into my back and making it easier to stand in front of Viktor, stalking around and around, with the window completely dark now and silent two or three hours after midnight it must have been. Viktor and van der Merwe kept up their stalking and prowling, while Swanepoel sat sipping coffee from his picnic basket, or sleeping, seeming to sleep, leaning his head forward on his arms, thick arms with pudgy fingers, and the toothless man staying silent in the background, watching, or getting up occasionally to leave the room and return with more sheets of telex. More sheets of telex from Cape Town for Swanepoel and for me, more questions and more questions about me and Mark and Tom – who's Tom? – and many others – who's Eric?

About three hours after midnight above the quiet streets and the room wasn't a

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room any more, not a room with chairs and desks and a couple of windows. It was a world with four faces, sometimes six, a world that was a void, moving around and around, swimming with faces and sheafs of paper, a talking pressing world where I was no longer standing because there was no need to stand because my legs were fixed into a solid mass of concrete covering my ankles and holding me up, pressing up into my back and forcing my shoulders forward, forcing my head to burst open burst open, under the weight of a huge sheet driving the ceiling down, and down, heavy into the floor. . .

‘Wakker!/Wake up! Viktor standing in front of me, shouting, prodding his finger into my chest: ‘You can’t stand there and sleep. Don’t try this sleeping with your eyes open. You must talk, talk. Sing like a canary, like a canary, sing!’

Oh God, couldn’t they leave me to sleep, even standing-up sleep? To get a break from the pressing down, holding out and feeling too tired to hold out any longer. Will they have got across the borders yet? Is it time yet, is it time yet? They know everything about me and it’s so unimportant, I’m so unimportant. God, it doesn’t matter now. Won’t they leave me alone,

‘Come on now’ – Swanepoel again – ‘come on, man, talk. You’re going to talk sometime so why not now? Save yourself the trouble. Save us the trouble.’ He talked quietly, soothingly. You’ll talk, like them all, because you want to talk. Don’t think we’ll beat you up, like you keep saying in the papers. That’s not our way. You’ll stand there and talk because you want to talk. We’ve had people here begging us to beat them up, begging us to force their confessions out. But we won’t do that. You’ll talk.’

Then the toothless man came into the room with a new telex which he gave, smiling, to Swanepoel. Swanepoel laughed and looked up: ‘We know,’ he said, ‘who Tom and Eric are. Now he’s told us. He’s singing like a canary, see. Come on now, you sing too, birdie.’

It was then, I think- a couple of hours before dawn – that I knew I was going to break. When Mark told them the identity of Tom and Eric, then I realized I would talk. For the first time I felt he had betrayed me: to talk was nothing, everybody talked, but he had tried to trick me, tried to make me seem responsible for giving away Tom and Eric. I knew well enough that he had known their identities all along, but had revealed only their pseudonyms. Why had he not spoken of them

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too, right from the start? Why only me? Why wait for at least twelve hours after giving my name to reveal their names? I was in the hands of the Branch, being cajoled, pressed, pressured into talking, tricked with coffee, threatened; and now I was up against him too, my former friend. I felt tricked. I was cornered, with nowhere to turn? How could I hold out any longer? I was tired, too tired even to feel anger now, too tired to care, too tired to think of anything except the effort of not falling down, in a daze of pain stretching across my back and shoulders – with a faint light beginning to play on the curtain opposite, lighting the window with dawn.

I knew I would crack then. Diane had been right. Everybody talks in the end. Swanepoel's picnic basket, the loneliness of the room on the top floor, the telexes – I couldn't hold out against them, not now with Mark against me too. There was nobody left, in the world but them and me, in the room with the tatty curtain over the window and the traffic beginning far below. Nobody else in the world.

'If you don't talk soon,' said Swanepoel, 'we'll leave you. We'll put you in a cell and leave you there for ever. You'll cry for us to come but we'll leave you, alone there, for ever.' If they left me alone there would be nobody left in the world at all, nobody to talk to. I would be standing alone in the concrete of pain in the back and shoulders with my head pressed down under the pain, wanting food wanting sleep wanting to drink wanting to stop.

Wanting to talk.

I wanted to talk. They were the only people I knew now in all the world and I wanted to talk to them. I wanted to ease off the load and tell them what they wanted to hear. It wouldn't matter because they knew most things already, but they said they wanted to hear it all from me myself. That didn't matter. Nothing mattered any more. It was all over now, all over, with everybody gone (the others must have had time by now to get across) and those that weren't gone they knew about now anyway. Nothing mattered any more except that it would be so nice to stop, to sit and to talk. So nice not to feel so tired. So nice not to care, not to have to care about anything at all.

Van der Merwe stood suddenly in front of me, angry and menacing, the enemy. 'Come on now,' he said sharply, 'we've played with you long enough now. Come on, no more playing.'

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I was afraid. I felt lost in the face of his hostility, something terrifying and new which I was not prepared for. Was he going to attack me? Beat me up? I was frightened, looking around for support. There was Viktor, standing next to van der Merwe but smiling, friendly, nodding and saying, protectively: 'Come on, man, talk. Come on – fuck you – talk, man.'

And I said: 'Fuck you too, OK I'll talk.'

And I sat down.

It was such sweet relief. So exquisitely easy to sit down with my head between my knees, rubbing my ankles. There was a cup of coffee for me, hot still from the thermos, and a smoke. Life seemed to slip back into my body as I leant forward on my arms at the desk, pushed myself up to drink the coffee, then leant again on my arms and told van der Merwe what he wanted to know. I told the whole pent-up story that they wanted in writing: the story of my recruitment by Diane, of how I met Tom who is Raymond Eisenstein, and Eric whom I still don't know, and others, and of how we planned and acted, and where I had taken part in whatever acts of sabotage – the pylons, signal cables, railway standards. Van der Merwe wrote earnestly in longhand and I watched him, slowly telling him what I thought then was the whole story, not thinking much about how it would seem but trying vaguely to shift things to the people I hoped were by now across the borders into safety, feeling too tired to feel remorse. Feeling only that the others knew Mark had talked and that therefore they would know it would be difficult for me not to talk, difficult for them not to talk because, anyway, it was finished, finished.

Van der Merwe sat writing, with me beside him. Two foolscap pages he filled with just the two of us in the room, the others having left with the picnic basket. They returned later, spruced up with shaves and clean suits, efficiently clean and ready for more and now hardly noticing me, on a chair in the corner, too tired to care or to sleep.

The picnic was over. I was the debris, swept away soon to the police cell at Jeppe, left in a crumpled mess on the mats on the floor, to sleep.

I SPENT more than two weeks in the police lockup at Jeppe. They were the first two weeks of my time inside, but I remember little about them. I remember being dumped there after my first day and night at the Greys – and I remember vividly

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what happened, a fortnight later, when I was taken back to the Greys for my second interrogation by the Special Branch.

But the time between is vague and misty. I was bemused by the sudden new world I was in. During that first day and night they had not only broken me, they had changed me. They had taken me from my world, cut me off from anything that could prop me up as a part of my world, and made me a part of their world. I felt too scared, too alone, too ashamed to fight the change. I was now part of their world and there was nothing I could do to change that. It was easier to do nothing, not to worry, easier to accept that all was finished, easier to feel uninvolved and dependent numb, cold like the winter outside.

I was a detainee under the 90-day law which meant I was allowed access to nothing: no papers or visits, no lawyer, nothing to read (except a Bible), no writing materials, nothing. The cell, too, had nothing in it: just the mats on the floor and a pile of filthy blankets, and the leaking, open bucket in the corner. The police, who resented the arrogant instructions left by the Special Branch, had no time to look after me: time only to rush in briefly with cold food, three times a day, but no time ever to give me exercise, and little time to take me to the police barracks for a bath. I was a detainee and a nuisance. For fourteen days, I slept and ate, thought about nothing, dazed, and had nobody to talk to except three bumbling and fairly amiable detectives (seconded to the Special Branch to help process the numerous detainees) who visited me four times to get further details from me of the actual sabotage attempts in which I had taken part.

There was nobody else to talk to except one Saturday night when a drunk was thrown into the empty cell next to me. I heard him coughing, puking, then he shouted to me: 'How you doing, mate?'

I danced to my door, shouting through the eyehole: 'Fine, man, and you?'

'Fine, man, yeah, they're getting my lawyer.'

'Why you here?'

'Pinched me for booze and breaking a flat.'

'That's bad.'

'Yeah, bad. And you?'

'Oh, me, sabotage.'

He was silent a moment, then said softly: 'Oh man, oh man, that's bad, man,

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that's a bad pinch, man.'

He said no more that night, and was gone the next morning.

On 24 July 1964, in the evening, I was taken back to the Greys by Lieutenants van der Merwe and Viktor. I remember that I had already eaten my supper, served usually before sunset, and had been playing a game of pat-ball against the wall of the cell with a pair of rolled-up socks. The cell door opened suddenly and there was van der Merwe, looking angry, oddly morose and unresponsive, with Viktor in the car. 'Kom/Come,' he said. They wouldn't talk as we drove towards the Greys, through streets, I remember clearly, glistening with rain in the evening lights. We passed a newspaper poster – 'French Warned Against Fighting' my first glimpse of anything to do with news for a fortnight. What fight, I wondered – then remembered the real Johannesburg world that had already become so far away, the world in which there was a touring French rugby team who would be playing a test match the next day.

Viktor and van der Merwe refused to discuss even that, as we drove past the turn to the Greys and drove instead down Eloff Street, down towards the railway station. Van der Merwe swung round and swore at me: 'Now you'll see your life dream come true' – and he bumped the car into the kerb in De Villiers Street, next to the entrance to the station.

'Kom/Come' – and they frogmarched me into the station and on to the interior concourse with its series of boxed-off stairway entrances leading down to the platforms.

'Look there,' said van der Merwe, pulling at my elbow and pointing at one of the entrances. I wasn't sure what he wanted me to look at. There were ropes tied across one of the entrances and cordoning off a large area around which stood a number of people, silently staring towards the platform entrance. Van der Merwe pulled me through the ropes and seemed to be pointing towards the entrance. I looked and could see only that the steel structure over the entrance seemed bent and twisted, and that there was a deal of broken glass around. And a uniformed cop standing by. Also standing near the cop – and this did interest me – was someone I recognized, John Stewart, a reporter on the Rand Daily Mail. His was the first friendly face I had seen since my detention fourteen days before and I smiled, pleased to see that he had seen me and had obviously recognized me.

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Van der Merwe saw him too and began pulling me away, back to the car, and I went with him, being pulled by the sleeve of my coat, while I tried to hang back, nodding at John Stewart and trying to prolong the pleasure of a familiar face. Van der Merwe, pulling me by the sleeve towards the car, said: 'One of your bombs has just killed fourteen people there.' I laughed. It was so ridiculous, so unthinkable. I had to laugh, as van der Merwe, furious – 'Your bomb!' – bundled me into the car. There was no silence this time from the two lieutenants as we drove back to the Greys. 'Fourteen people!' they shouted, 'your bomb! You're going to talk tonight. No jokes tonight Lewin. You'll shit yourself tonight. Fourteen people. Tonight you'll die.' Van der Merwe stopped the car in front of the Greys: 'Tonight, Lewin, I'm going to kill you.'

I believed him, but I felt detached. Nothing he had told me about the station bomb, nothing I had seen there bore any relation to me. We had never planned such an attack. We had specifically planned against such an attack. I could think of nobody left outside – if there were still people outside – who could have planted such a bomb. Nothing they shouted at me was real. Nothing they said about me was real. They were talking about somebody else. It wasn't me they were shouting at. It wasn't me at all. It was happening to somebody else, not me. It was somebody else they were taking out of the car in front of the Greys; somebody else being walked, dragged, to the lift and up to the sixth floor and down the corridor into the room at the end with tatty curtains over the windows; somebody else being made to stand where I had stood before.

They stood me where I had stood before on the spot in front of the cabinet. Van der Merwe cursed me as he went round the room pulling closed the curtains across the windows (what was the point, I thought, closing curtains in a room so high up, and such useless curtains) and shouting at me: 'You're going to talk, you're going to die, tonight we'll kill you.'

Van der Merwe came back to me on the spot, straight to me. He pulled off my glasses and threw them on to the table behind him, and began hitting me: hard cupped fists, hissing through his teeth, hard fists to the head and face, mainly around the eyes and ears, beating beating while I screamed and pleaded. All I could think of was to scream, scream like one of our African reporters had said scream when you're arrested and they start beating you up, just scream because that pleas-

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es them and takes your mind off it too. Van der Merwe hit me and I screamed. I found myself down on the floor in the far right hand corner of the room with van der Merwe standing over me, kicking, not hard, as I grabbed his leg and pleaded and screamed. He shouted at me: 'What sort of a soldier are you now? Where's your big talk now?' and he gave hard kicks till I was back on the spot again in front of the steel cabinet, seeing double through one eye, double van der Merwe swinging his fists at my head and Viktor standing beside him watching. And then I saw only van der Merwe, as if down a long hazy tunnel with hissing teeth and fists at the end of it, slamming at me again, down on the floor next to a steel plate with scraps of food in it. Double plates of food and double pairs of legs as I struggled to get up to my spot again, surprised to hear through the haze van der Merwe saying: 'God, hy's fiks/he's fit.' I was back on my spot again, facing a tunnel full of fists and screams and hissing. A hand pushed through into the tunnel, holding back the fists, holding out a cigarette towards me, and a match. 'Have a smoke,' said Viktor.

I cannot say how long it had lasted. Possibly only a few minutes. Even less perhaps. But long enough to feel it would be the end, thinking: This is it and this is what it'll be like and I wonder if I'll actually know when it's over. Detached, never fully able to fix the body on the floor as me, not feeling hurt by the blows because it wasn't me they were hitting; somebody else with my body and my eyes beginning to cloud over, my ears beginning to ring, my head to hammer. But me screaming screaming that I didn't know anything about it and offering two scraps of information which I'd withheld before and which I hoped might stop the beating: the fact that I thought I knew where the rest of the dynamite was stored; and the name of a friend, John Harris. Viktor nodded they'd already heard of him next door.

Next door, my former flatmate, Ernest, was being interrogated. He had been detained the previous day. Four months later, he was the prime witness in the case in which John Harris was charged – and convicted – of planting the bomb in the station, killing one and seriously injuring two others. Five months after the case, John Harris was executed at Central Prison, Pretoria.

When I mentioned his name at the Greys on the night of the station bomb itself, Viktor nodded, unimpressed, and busied himself rather with what interested him more: details of the dynamite and where it had been stored. Van der Merwe left off

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threatening me and the two of them made to leave the office. 'God help you,' said Viktor, 'if we don't find anything.' They left me, sitting down with a smoke, one eye nearly closed, the other aching – watched by a series of strange looking Branch men, all of them cursing, most of them drunk. One, whom they called Hokkie, sat down at the desk in front of me, growling, thick bull neck and bristling blond hair, growling: 'jy's a Jood vokken Jood/You're a Jew fucking Jew' – and then suddenly screaming that I must get up, stand up on that spot there. He came round the desk towards me, his fist raised at shoulder height, the biggest fist I have ever seen, stinking of brandy and shouting 'Jood Jood vanaand is jy dood dood/Jew Jew you'll die tonight' pushing me back against the cabinet with his fists: 'I'm going to kill you Jew I'm going to push my fist through your face Jood dood Jood.' Pushing me back against the steel, but never actually hitting me, a huge fist at my throat, threatening.

Then suddenly Hokkie was gone and the room began to fill with other, more senior men. Van der Merwe and Viktor were there again, and Swanepoel. I hadn't seen Swanepoel that night. Swanepoel came in with the rest, looking thunderous, the bossman, I thought. But he was quiet with the rest, standing up and aside as a tall, elegant gent came in, with steel-rimmed glasses and a smart suit, looking like a smooth English businessman and speaking smooth elegant English. I recognized him: Brigadier van den Bergh, head of the Security Police, henchman and former detention camp colleague of Vorster. Surprisingly smooth. He was polite and quiet: the man they were looking for, he said, had fair hair, was of medium height, and had used a timer of exceptional accuracy. He had phoned the papers to say a bomb would go off at 4.33 P.M. and at 4.33 the bomb had gone off. All they wanted, said the brigadier, was his name. They hoped I would cooperate. I explained – through my one closed eye and the other seeing double, seeing two smooth English-looking businessmen – I explained that I had, to the best of my ability, cooperated. But I doubted if I could help much because I knew nobody fitting the description (John Harris was almost bald) and we had opposed such activities. He nodded, said 'Thank you' and turned to leave, hands in pockets, bowing slightly to the attendant lieutenants. He stopped at the door, looked round at me with a slight smile, and said, 'I hope that by the morning you will have decided to give us the name of the man.' Brigadier van den Bergh smiled and retired to his office just down the corri-

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dor. That was about 11 p.m., a long time till morning.

Five months later, when my assault charge against van der Merwe was brought to court, van der Merwe's counsel – while crossexamining me – informed the court that, if necessary, the head of the Security Police, Brigadier van den Bergh himself, would be prepared to testify on van der Merwe's behalf, that he was at the Greys throughout the night of 24 July and that he, van den Bergh, knew exactly what was going on in the building that night and that nobody was assaulted by any member of his force. He would testify to that under oath.

On the night itself, he had hardly left the beating-up room for his office just down the corridor when Swanepoel stormed at me: 'You may think you've convinced the brigadier but you haven't convinced me. If I catch you out in one lie tonight, Lewin, I'll kill you.'

Then Swanepoel left too and the room was almost quiet. I sat on a chair in the corner, watched by two Pretoria Branch men. 'Don't think,' they said, 'you'll be protected by the papers and Jews overseas – you'll be shot dead there, just like that, shot dead while trying to escape ha-ha. You people just wait,' they said, 'just wait till we take over this country properly, wait till we get rid of softies like Vorster. Yes, Vorster's soft, he listens too much to outsiders. Then you'll see. Wag maar/Just wait. You bloody journalists. When we take over there'll be only two newspapers: the Government Gazette and the Police Gazette.'

At one stage the door opened and they brought in Raymond Eisenstein – Tom, also detained a fortnight before – his face puffy and red, bruises around the eyes. 'You know each other,' they said. We looked at each other and said nothing. They dragged him out again, into the passage, and I heard the on(man (whom I met in Pretoria later, named van der Vyver,' scream: 'Staan op Jood/Stand up Jew' and there was a scuffle, with the sounds of thuds and hits.

Those were common sounds at the Greys that night. Doors slamming, thuds and screams, shouts, thuds, screams. At about midnight I heard distinct movements in the office immediately above us: bangings and scrapings, as if furniture was being moved across the floor, dragged and pushed, thumps on the floor shaking the ceiling of our office; then silence; then more thumps and scrapings. The two Branchmen looked at each other and at me smiling, nodding knowingly and smiling, as the noise above continued, seemingly endlessly, then stopped. Shortly after-

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wards the door of our room opened and a man came in, looking for the towel hanging behind the door. He needed it to wipe his hands; his fists were full of blood, particularly the right fist, the one with a large ring on, messy with blood.

‘Daardie Harris,’ he said, ‘that Harris – another one who said he wouldn’t talk without a lawyer.’ Wiping the blood off his fist, and laughing. The other two laughed too. The man with the ring – he was Erasmus – went out again. He left the towel on its hook behind the door, dirtier now than before.

‘You see,’ said the Branchmen to me, ‘you mustn’t cause trouble.’

The building seemed quieter. No more bangings, no screams. Then Swanepoel stuck his head around the door – the first time I had seen him since his threat to kill me earlier. He looked pleased with himself, He ignored me but told my mentors to get ready to take me back to the police station. ‘Orn te rus,’ he said, mildly, ‘to rest.’ He nodded to the others: ‘Ons het hom/ We’ve got the man.’

That was about 1 a.m. By then, John Harris – ‘the man’ in the room above us – had a broken jaw.

Soon afterwards I was bundled into a car by the Branchmen. In the car already were two Africans, their faces bruised, and with handcuffs on their wrists. I knew one of them, ‘Peter’, one of the men I had occasionally met at discussion groups and who was said to have a group of supporters in the black townships.

‘You know each other, don’t you?’ said one of the Branchmen laughing. I looked up at Peter and he nodded at me slightly, and said ‘No’ to the Branchman. It was a cold night, and cold in the car outside, but both Peter and the other man in handcuffs, whom I didn’t know, were sweating. Their faces were bruised and glistening with sweat. It had been a bad night for everybody. Peter and his companion were dropped off first at two separate police stations, then I was delivered to Jeppe. It was about 3.30 a.m. in the charge office: there were a couple of the Jeppe cops on duty who had seen me often before during the previous two weeks. They looked surprised when I was brought in by the Branch, but they said nothing as they took me to the cell. Within three hours I was collected again by the Branch – stiff, aching and unseeing – to check addresses with them, and only then could I return to the cell-mats on the floor, to sleep, sleep.

The following morning – Sunday, after the Friday night – two young cops opened the cell with breakfast and offered to take me for a bath. I went, hobbling,

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and for the first time in days saw myself in the mirror: an unrecognizable face, with the left eye closed by a large blue egg beneath it, the right eye bruised, blood on both eyeballs and a large swelling behind my right ear. I stood in front of the mirror and stared, with the cops, at the sight, not helped by unwashed blood and three days' stubble. We laughed together about it, then they produced some aspirins for me and asked who'd done the beating-up. The following morning I was collected by Erasmus and another Branchman – Erasmus the man who had beaten up John Harris. They took me from the police cell at Jeppe and drove me to Pretoria, to prison. Erasmus had a bruised right eye. I asked him about it and he said he'd got it playing rugby on Saturday afternoon. I hoped he was lying about that – and I hoped it hurt.

HUGH LEWIN



TOUCH

IT IS ANOTHER TIME, another place. It's nearly thirty years since I was dumped out of the Fort on to that early-morning street in Hillbrow in December 1971. Now it's October 2001 and I am in Thailand, discussing the possibilities of media training for refugees. I'm struck by the irony: not only that I should be there myself, wonderfully unexpectedly, after the years of exile in the UK and Zimbabwe and my return home, but that, after all the years of isolation, South Africa's experience of change in 1994 has become an example for other countries still dealing with oppressive regimes. Sitting there in Chiang Mai, I am pondering the relevance of our struggle in distant places.

Yet here I am, meeting someone with a parallel experience. A former student leader, Bo Kyi is also an ex political detainee and prisoner. During the past eleven years, he has done seven years in Burmese jails, including time in the dreadful Insein Prison in Rangoon (that's its name). Now he's in exile. As with most former political prisoners I've encountered during my years since Pretoria Local, we swap stories of our experiences in endless detail. What Bo Kyi tells me of his conditions in detention and their physical conditions in the Insein make Pretoria begin to

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seem like a doddle.

Perhaps it is that – and the fact that he is clearly exhausted – that makes Bo Kyi seem rather reserved towards me, even when my Thai host Patrick tells him that I have brought him a copy of my prison book, *Bandiet*. He nods and takes the book without much enthusiasm. Then his face lights up and he breaks into a warm smile. ‘Is this true?’ he turns to Patrick. ‘Is this LOO-IN?’ He is suddenly very animated.

‘Yes,’ says Patrick, ‘this is Loo-in, Lewin.’

‘Ah,’ I says Bo Kyi, peering at me over his beer – and he explains that he is putting the finishing touches to a collection of stories from people in prison in Burma and how (I think it is from a collection of writings from Danish Amnesty) he has come across a poem from prison by someone called Loo-in and how he has been trying without success to contact this Loo-in for permission to use the poem.

‘Ah,’ he says again, ‘so you wrote “Touch” ’

Well, Yes. I wrote ‘Touch’ as a poem in about 1970, while still in prison, soon after we moved into the new section at Pretoria Local. I was just beginning to think of the impossible, of coming to the end of my seven-year stretch and being able to leave prison. I wrote a first draft of ‘Touch’ one evening and gave it on a rough sheet of paper to that father of all Pretoria political prisoners, Ivan Schermbrucker. Ivan stood at my cell door the following morning, waving the paper excitedly. ‘You’ve got to write more of this,’ he said, banging the bars of my grille. Ivan never did things quietly. ‘Much more! My God, they’ll come to regret they ever put us inside. You go tell it!’

So, yes, for Ivan and, much later, for Bo Kyi: ‘Touch’ the poem was the beginning of the telling. It soon grew its own wings and happily travelled the performance circuit of the anti apartheid scene. Once it was hijacked by a budding writer in London and used as part of a (nonpolitical) prisoners’ calendar, with a new ending and, as I now discover in Thailand, it gets discovered by Bo Kyi and says something to him and his fellow prisoners in Burma, about the experiences of political prisoners in that far-distant land. Ivan, the Old Grey Fox of Local Prison, who served five years for being a communist, would have liked the irony of that. Sad that he was one of those white politicals who served their full time in Pretoria but who died before Madiba’s walk out of Pollsmoor flagged the beginning of change.

HUGH LEWIN

TOUCH

When I get out
I'm going to ask someone
to touch me
very gently please
and slowly,
touch me
I want
to learn again
how life feels.

I've not been touched
for seven years
for seven years
I've been untouched
out of touch
and I've learnt
to know now
the meaning
of untouchable.

Untouched – not quite
I can count the things
that have touched me.

One: fists
At the beginning
fierce mad fists
beating beating
till I remember
screaming
don't touch me
please don't touch me.

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Two: paws

The first four years of paws

every day

patting paws, searching

– arms up, shoes off

legs apart –

prodding paws, systematic

heavy, indifferent

probing away

all privacy.

I don't want fists and paws

I want

to want to be touched

again

and to touch.

I want to feel alive

again

I want to say

when I get out

Here I am

please touch me.

HUGH LEWIN

THE PHONE CALL

THE PRISON REGULATIONS said No News. Politicals can have No News of Outside. They must not know what's happening Outside, they must not know of any political event Outside. They must be totally isolated. In the interests of the State and its Security.

The politicals worked in the Carpentry Shop. This was a relatively small workshop accessible only from the inside yard and thus isolated completely from the outside, beyond the high wall round the yard, beyond the catwalk on top of the wall, guarded always by the man with a rifle. Inside the Carpentry Shop was space enough for four workbenches, each with its own tool cabinet, with a listed inventory of the tools in each cupboard. The list was checked at the beginning of each work session and at the end of each day to ensure that any tools stayed permanently inside the Carpentry Shop.

In the far corner of the Carpentry Shop was a door leading into a smaller room, which was the Office of the Carpentry Shop Officer. He was a large man, with huge hands and a strangely pleasant smile, who checked the tools at the beginning of each session, and again at the end of each session, and then locked the tools safely away in their cabinets at the end of each working day. The rest of the time he spent in his Office in the inside corner of the workshop, studying his huge hands and cleaning his fingernails with a large chisel.

On some occasions he was seen to be sitting quite still, his chin resting on his fists, staring endlessly at the opposite wall. Once the unexpected arrival of another warder disturbed his apparent reverie and revealed that the Officer had, tucked into his hand, a very small radio that he was listening to – which, in a Carpentry Shop for Politicals, who had to be totally isolated, was strictly forbidden, even for the Officer. Sometimes he would study the pages of a newspaper on his desk, quickly stuffing the pages into a drawer if any other warder visited the workshop. The prisoners, barred from news, were not allowed into his Office: they stood at the door, asking aimless questions while they stretched their necks to get an upside-down view of the news page, which was invariably long out-of-date or contained only sports news and comics, over which the Carpentry Officer would chuckle for long hours.

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No great events rocked the inner sanctum of the Carpentry Shop nor disturbed its secure isolation from the rest of the prison and the rest of the world. But the Carpentry Officer did have, on the shining smoothness of the desktop in his inner office, one temptingly fascinating object of attention for the politicals: a telephone. A telephone that worked, an aggravatingly tempting symbol of broken barriers, instant link with the great world of events and news outside.

The telephone didn't function much. It would occasionally ring to warn the Officer that some Important Visitors were about to descend on the workshop, whereupon he would scurry out of his Office to ensure that all was well, hustling and shining and busy in the Carpentry Shop. Sometimes the Carpentry Officer would appear to make internal calls, lifting the receiver and speaking to someone presumably within the prison because the call involved no dialling. Very occasionally he could be seen actually dialling a number himself; then he would settle back into his chair with the receiver tucked under his chin into his shoulder, a contented look about him. On these occasions, he would lean across his desk and push the door of his office so that it became partially closed to the inquisitive eyes (and ears) of the prisoners.

Every afternoon, having checked the tools in each of the tool cabinets, and locked them, the Officer would return to his Office and methodically place a lock on the dial of his phone, then lock the key to the lock in a drawer, then carefully lock the door of his Office, then lock the door of the Carpentry Shop. Once only, the prisoners noted (for they watched these things), did the Officer forget to lock the dial of his phone before he locked his Office and locked the workshop, and on that occasion later in the evening, after lock-up when the cells were all already sealed for the night and just before the nightman with his fearsome dog appeared in the yard, the Officer was spotted hurrying back to the Carpentry Shop, presumably to fix the forgotten phone lock.

So, for the prisoners, ill content in their isolation and perpetually seeking ways to bridge the walls of silence, the Officer's phone in the Office Carpentry Shop was thought of as an unlikely source of smuggled enlightenment. Greater potential seemed to lie in the chance that the Officer would one day bring to work more than just the comics and sports section of his newspaper, or that – a true prize he would neglect to return to his pocket the mini-radio and that there would be some chance

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of lifting it. The telephone remained firmly in the realm of Outside, beyond reach.

Until the day of the Big Visit. Nobody seemed to know who was coming, nor precisely when, but quite early one morning a young warder came running breathlessly into the Carpentry Shop and shouted that the prisoners had to line up IMMEDIATELY outside in the yard with their coats on and that the Officer must come now, now, NOW because the Chief was there and wanted to see him now-now-QUICK, and he shouted at the prisoners to Hurry-Hurry as he skidded out again and ran dementedly toward the Chief's office on the other side of the yard. The Carpentry Officer was, for once, considerably roused by this display of official energy and bustled around the prisoners as they downed tools ('Leave them where they are!') and fell into line outside the Carpentry door, ready for whatever High Dignitary might be looming.

At first the Carpentry Officer stood firmly beside his line of prisoners, his bulky hands clasped behind his back and scowling for silence as everybody peered across the yard toward the Chief's Office, waiting for signs of the visitation. The young warder with the Urgent Message was hopping from foot to foot outside the Office, but there was no further sign of any cause for panic, and the Carpentry Officer, hands clasped still behind his back, began slowly to move across the yard towards the Office, occasionally glancing behind him at the prisoners to ensure that they stayed silent and in line. By the time he reached the hopping youngster, the Carpentry man was all of thirty metres away from his workshop, able still to keep an eye on the line of prisoners standing outside it.

At which point the prisoner standing immediately in front of the door of the Carpentry Shop was able to slip out of line and back into the workshop itself, temporarily out of sight of the Officer and the other guards. Inside the shop the Officer's Office door stood open. The prisoner urgently whispered to his fellow prisoners nearest the door to knock loudly if someone returned from across the yard, then he nipped into the Office, going straight to the Officer's desk. There were only three drawers: the top one was locked and there were no keys in sight on top of the desk; the second drawer was open and cluttered with scraps of paper, but no newspaper; and the third had only an empty lunch box in it. No newspapers, no radio. Not even a morsel of contraband.

But on the shining top of the desk, sitting neatly next to a Prisons Department

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blotter full of doodles, was the telephone. The telephone, with no lock on the dial. The prisoner quickly ran, bent double beneath the window line, back to the outer door and repeated the instruction to warn him with knocks if anybody should return. Then he scuttled back to the unguarded phone and sat down opposite it in the Officer's chair. What to do? He was now four years into his sentence and, after four years of isolation, he found suddenly that he could remember no phone numbers. No, one: the number of his original home, at the village outside Pretoria, going back fifteen years: 65119. He could remember with absolute distinctness how his father, now ten years dead, used to lift the old black handset and say: 'Hello, this is six five one one nine.' Or his mother's more frequent 'Six five double-one nine.' But the rest, gone, blank. And the special dialling code between Pretoria and his home town, Johannesburg, unused and unthoughtof for the four years gone.

It was madness. Here was a phone, unguarded, a godsend, but no numbers. The prisoner delved frantically back into the second drawer of the desk and found, among the papers, a tattered copy of a phone directory, for Pretoria only, without covers, but with lovely long lists of numbers. Whom to phone?

Daytime, normal working hours of a weekday, and in Pretoria, where there had been so few friends. Whom to phone, and how to contact Johannesburg, where, there were so many friends and wives of fellow inmates? He found the name of a friend, once quite a close and sympathetic friend, but they had not been in touch for several years and certainly not during the trauma of the trial. Not even sure that he was still Business Manager at his father's firm. But here was the same name, and the telephone number of the firm.

Was that a knock? The prisoner jumped from the chair and ran to the Office door, but all still seemed calm, the warders standing in a chattering hustle across the yard.

Rush back to the desk but ... how to get a line? Would the phone connect to the office across the yard or to a switchboard in the main section of the prison? Would they recognise that it wasn't the Carpentry Officer on the line? The prisoner lifted the receiver, holding it carefully, strangely, and coughed to clear his throat. A woman's voice sounded: 'Ja?'

He coughed again and said gruffly, thickening the accent as much as possible: 'Lyn, asseblief /Line, please.' Silence. She said nothing. Had she suspected?. He held

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on, his fingers straining on the handset, beginning to sweat. Then suddenly there was that old familiar click and the burr of a dialling tone. Just like that, Burrrrrrr. The prisoner laughed aloud, then hurried to find the number again in the directory. He dialled, dialled a simple telephone number again, so simple and automatic, after four years. It was ringing again, the old sound, unchanged, almost welcoming and another woman's voice answered, sounding younger, less guttural than the Prison's voice: 'Knowles Brothers, hello.'

The prisoner stuttered. 'Is James there, please?'

'Mr James?'

'Yes, please.' Mr James now, indeed. His hand still sweating, still no warning knocks from the outside door. And the less-guttural woman (What did she look like?) politely asked him 'Sir' to wait. (Sir! Four years of abuse and being sworn at, and she called his voice Sir!)

'Mr Knowles's office,' said another, even sweeter voice. (What did SHE look like?) 'Can I help you?'

'Is James Knowles there, please?' he stammered, unsure. Perhaps he was intruding.

'Who's calling, please, Sir?' So sweet, but some frigidity there.

'Tell him' – perhaps all the lines were tapped 'tell him it's an old friend, and it's urgent.'

'Please hold on, Sir.' Traces still of ice. Protective. But – 'I'm putting you through now, Sir.'

'Knowles here.' The same voice, slightly highpitched and with a touch of gruffness, yet instantly recognizable and slightly apprehensive. (Wonder if he's gone greyer?)

'Hello, James, it's me' – and the prisoner chuckled. He could almost feel the gulp and distant awkwardness from his friend. 'Don't worry, James. It's only me and I'm still Inside and I don't want anything. Just had the chance to phone and say hello.' The prisoner, secure in his imprisoned isolation, comforted his Outside friend, surrounded by the complicated insecurities of unimprisonment. 'It's only me, James.'

'Yes, yes. What do you want? I mean, how are you?'

The prisoner laughed again. 'Sorry to bother you, and how are you? It's been a long time.'

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‘Yes, yes, indeed,’ recovering ‘but where ARE you? I hear you’ve had a rough time, yes?’

‘No sweat. It’s good to hear you. I’m Inside. But, please’ – the sudden recollection of the Officer’s Office and the line of fellow prisoners outside the door and the warders across the yard ‘tell me what’s been happening? Quickly, I’ve not much time. What’s new?’

‘Oh, nothing much really. We’re all well. Oh, Dad died. Last year and I’m now in charge here, with Raymond. You remember? No, nothing’s happening really, nothing...’

‘James, quickly, what’s the news? I’ve not seen a newspaper for four years. What’s the NEWS, man, the news?’

‘Oh dear, yes, well, I see what you mean. Hmm, yes, the news. Well, there’s really not much happening, you know. Are you sure this is all right?’

‘Yes, it’s all right. But the news, James, what are today’s headlines then, just the headlines? Read me the headlines.’

But James couldn’t find the morning paper, nor remember anything of importance from it, apart from a car crash, and the rugby team had lost. ‘Internationally? The Sino-Soviet dispute? Middle East? America? Vietnam? Europe? What’s been HAPPENING? What’s happening in the townships? Anything happening HERE?’

‘It’s really rather difficult, you know. And such a surprise to hear your voice again, nice surprise. You sound so completely unchanged. Marvellous to think you’re all right, well, getting through it all, all right, are you?’

‘Yes, all right, James, thanks.’ The prisoner shrugged and tried to comfort his Outside friend: it didn’t matter, really, and everything would be all right, but could he please look up a number in the Johannesburg directory, quickly please: the Stewarts in Melrose, Malcolm Stewart, probably somewhere like Melrose Drive, Melrose, if he remembered right. Yes, that sounded right, many thanks. And he scribbled the number on the back of a piece of sandpaper lying on the Officer’s desk and ‘Thanks, James, goodbye then. See you sometime – putting the receiver back, clammy.

Outside the Office, the line of prisoners stood as before, watching the cluster of warders across the yard. No apparent change, and still no sign of the impending visit. So the prisoner ran back into the Office and, almost before getting to the

HUGH LEWIN

Officer's chair again, lifted the receiver and confidently asked for 'Lyn, asseblief' and, again, there it was. Burr-burr.

The prisoner reached for the piece of sandpaper and then stopped; he had the Johannesburg number, but how to dial there? He had forgotten to ask James for the code. Was it perhaps 19? He paused, tried that, and got what could only have been an engaged sound. Slowly he replaced the receiver and wondered. Could he dare? Was there time? (Hurried check at the door – all well.) So he tried again, easily now adding a greeting: 'More, mevrou. Morning. Lyn, asseblief' – and again she gave him one and, with smiling care, he redialled the Pretoria number. 'I've just been talking to Mr James. Could I please speak to him again briefly? Thank you so much.' And straight through: 'Hello again. James. No panic, just what's the dialling code to Jo'burg? Thanks. 'Bye now.'

Surely she would start to suspect something. Did the Officer ever make so many outside calls, so soon after each other? Maybe it was a big switchboard with several guttural ladies. Unlikely. What would she do, would she really care? What could they do, anyway? Worth the risk: 'Nog 'n lyn, asseblief./ Another line, please! This time she said nothing: burr, just like that. Easy. With extra care, the prisoner dialled first the code, then the new number, and it began to ring. This would be better, he thought: these friends were in fairly close touch with his family and knew his conditions, and were more interested in world events than James – and now he could ask the right sort of questions, quickly, straight away, feeling better prepared and more confident.

'Hello,' said a strange voice, young but not Lydia's. A new maid perhaps.

'Mrs Stewart, please,' said the prisoner.

'Not here, master.' Oh, my God – master. Four years into a sentence for actions against apartheid and MASTER. 'Madam's not here, no, master. No, the master's not here either, master. Phone back this afternoon, Please, master.'

Yes, all right, thank you – but how could he begin to explain the problems of phoning back this afternoon, any afternoon, and no, he's sorry he can't easily be reached if he left you the number, which he doesn't actually know because it's not written here on the Officer's phone? But, thank you, and are you well all the way over there in Johannesburg?

The Officer's phone ... The prisoner suddenly realized there was something of a

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commotion outside the Office. He hurriedly replaced the receiver and just had time to reach the door of the Office when the urgent young warder burst through the line of prisoners and rushed into the empty workshop, his eyes wide, almost tearful, meeting the prisoner inside the workshop. 'Wat DOEN jy hier?/What are you DOING here?' it was more of a choked scream than a question and the warder at first ignored the prisoner and ran straight into the Officer's Office, looking around everywhere, pulling open the drawers and, finally, lifting the handset of the phone and staring at it. 'Were you here?' the warder shouted, still holding the handset and raging at the prisoner. 'Were you HERE, I say!' – reaching again to a scream.

The prisoner shrugged and stared back, gaining insolent confidence in the face of the young warder's hysterical discomfort. 'Miskien, ja./Perhaps, yes.' He turned his back and began walking out of the workshop. The warder stuttered after him: 'Ek sal jou CHARGE./ I'll charge you!' The prisoner looked back over his shoulder and shrugged again. He was in time to slip back unnoticed into the line of prisoners just as the Commanding Officer and his deputy, with the Carpentry Officer and the several visiting Dignitaries, emerged into the yard and stepped formally toward them. It was an Official Visit from several Important People who, as they reached the Carpentry Shop, were greeted with a snappy salute from the young warder now standing alongside the line of political prisoners. The warder looked flustered but lifted his chin and shouted: 'All's PRESENT and CORRECT, SIR!' The Commanding Officer, with the Carpentry Officer beside him, nodded contentedly, happy to see that the State's interests remained sound and secure, at all times. All under control. No chink in the armour.

HUGH LEWIN

THREE FRIENDS

Three of my friends
I met for the last time
in court. They came to give evidence
against me.

The first friend
talked very fast very fully.
We had shared a flat
so he could talk very fast very fully.
And after he (in the box)
had talked very fully about me (in the dock)
he walked back from the box and looked expectantly towards me
and I remembered the flat
and the many times together
and I thought of how he had talked
talked in the box about the other friend
and sent him to the gallows
as he walked back from the box, expectantly
I could only stare back at him
and watch him go his way.

The second friend
wore a hat in the box
which was strange -
I had never seen her in a hat before.
On the first day as she walked back from the box
I watched only the hat.
But then on the second day
as I watched the hat again
I remembered the one time she had worn a hat
a balaclava
out in the veld under the pylons
when we blew them

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And I realised how little she had said
in the box
about the balaclava and the pylons.
As she walked back from the box
and looked towards me
I couldn't help
 winking
as she went away.

The third
the third close friend
 had been best-man at my wedding.
He was known for being
an excellent talker, a born actor, they said
and we had heard how
against other friends in other places
he had wept in the box.
We were thankful he didn't weep
in the box against us:
he chewed his lips and talked and talked.
Afterwards, as we were led to the cells downstairs,
I bumped into him, sitting with his Branch men
and when he saw me he jumped up
as if to talk to me.
We couldn't talk. Didn't he know that we
 best-man and groom
could never talk again?
And yet as I passed him on the way to the cell
I found I couldn't help
smiling
 back at him.

Three of my close friends
I met for the last time
in court. One I watched
one I winked at

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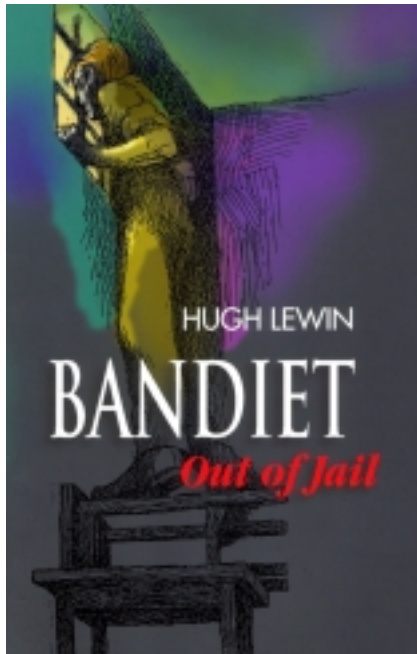
to one I gave a smile of recognition.

I wondered
sitting in the dock
about the wink and the smile
and the friend I could only watch.
I sat in the dock with three other friends
and watched as each of the old friends
stood talking in the box
talking aloud
alone.

There was room in the box
for only one one
at a time
in that box
but in the dock with us
there was room for many more.

Seeing them like that
for the last time as friends
sitting in the dock, four of us together
with room for more
I realised
(after the wink and the smile
passing tokens of past friendship)
I realised that they knew.
They
alone in the box
with room for only one
they knew
about their box
with room for only one.

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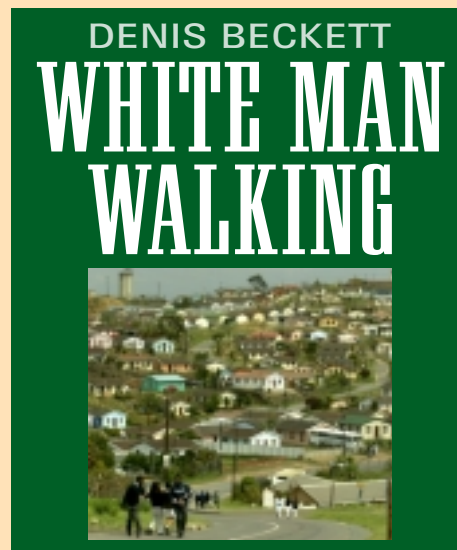
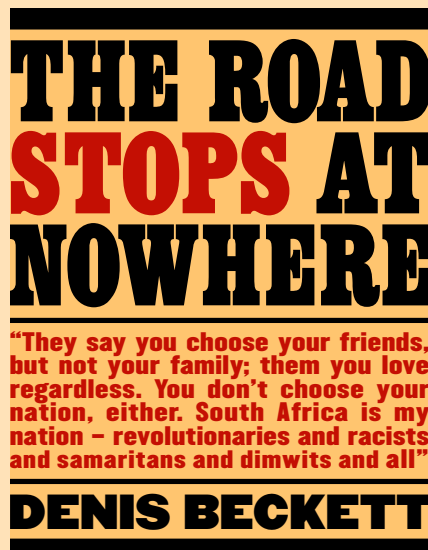
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