

ST CYPRIAN'S RECTORY

DA 12

3799  
Sharpeville  
1933

15 October 1984

South African Police  
Vanderbijlpark  
1900

Dear Sirs

I am the Anglican Rector of the parish of St Cyprian's,  
Sharpeville.

1. I have been asked by Captain Horn to provide a statement explaining what I know about the circumstances leading to the passing by the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg of a resolution which read as follows:

"That this Synod send a cable to the Acting State President stating

'This Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg unanimously protests in the strongest possible terms the provocative and irresponsible behaviour of Police, reported to us in respect of our Priest and his family in Sharpeville.

'We have it on first hand authority that late in the evening whilst all was quiet outside and whilst they were praying within their home, they were attacked by the Police firing tear smoke canisters into the rectory. As well as damage to the church's property, and that of the family, such action posed a grave threat not only of serious injury, but also to

the health of the Rector, his wife and children.

'An explanation is required.

Timothy Bishop of Johannesburg.'

2. As you are well aware, there was a great deal of discontentment in the Vaal Triangle area arising out of the notice given by the Town Council of Lekoa of its intention to increase rents. The effect of these increases would be that rents payable by the people in the area would be the highest in the Republic. Meetings were held on the subject and a number of the meetings took place at my church in Sharpeville. I know that the Town Council resented this use of my church and threats against me were issued by the Mayor and members of his Council.
3. On the evening of Sunday, 2 September 1984, I attended the opening of the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg. When I returned home quite late that night, I found that there was rioting in Sharpeville.
4. On the morning of Monday, 3 September, I again left Sharpeville to attend the Synod but returned in the afternoon.
5. From about 16h00 on 3 September, I was at home. My neighbourhood was quiet.
6. Some time after 21h00 on 3 September, I was still at my home with my wife and my three children aged 11, 9 and 3. Also with me at home was a family

consisting of mother, father and three children. Also there was my cousin and one of my fellow Anglican priests, Father Tshubela. Most of the children were asleep and the adults were saying our evening prayers. Up to this time, the neighbourhood was still quiet. Then, as we were praying, we heard shots being fired outside. We heard the windows of the house breaking and I saw smoke coming out of two of the bedrooms. It was apparent that teargas canisters had been fired into the bedrooms. There was a commotion as we rushed into the bedroom to rescue the children from the teargas. Neighbours came in and helped us take the children out. In the commotion, I personally did not see any police vehicles outside but it was clear to me that these teargas canisters must have been fired by members of the police force. I still have the canisters at my home.

7. We all had a most frightening and unpleasant experience. The children were crying as a result of the shock, through fear and also because of the effects of the teargas.
8. After we had got out and were at the house of a neighbour, my wife and I found that one of our children was missing. I went back into the house and then saw two sedan cars and a big police truck coming in the direction of my house. My house is on a corner. Three bedrooms face one street while the front faces the other street. I went in through the front door of the house. I could not find the child I was looking for. I tried to get

out but was frightened to do so because the big truck was parked opposite the front door and, had I gone out of the back door, I could have been shot at from the big truck or from the sedan which was parked in the other street "covering" the back door. At this stage, another teargas canister was fired towards the house. I was trapped in the house. It seemed to me that these police vehicles were watching for me and I did not know what their plans were. In this process, I had to breathe a lot of teargas which was most unpleasant. After some time, the vehicles moved off and I then joined my family. We found that one of the neighbours had taken the missing child.

9. The next day I found seven rubber bullets in and around my house. I concluded that these had been fired into my house at the same time as the teargas canisters were fired.
10. As a result of the incidents described, I and my family have suffered severely:
  - (a) The effect of the teargas upon me was such that I had to obtain medical treatment the following day.
  - (b) On the night in question and for some days afterwards, my wife and children suffered acute irritation and discomfort, although they did not obtain medical help.
  - (c) The atmosphere in the house was so offensive

and uncomfortable that we had to vacate it and find accommodation elsewhere until we eventually returned on Saturday, 6 October. But even now, the smell is offensive and irritating. We will have to obtain some professional advice on what can be done to make the house properly habitable in future.

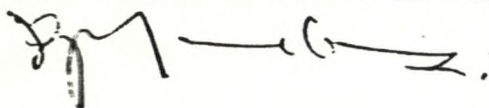
- (d) Having to obtain accommodation elsewhere and travel to and fro has been expensive and has put us to additional cost which we cannot afford. Travelling expenses alone have been quite considerable.
- (e) Eight window panes in my house have been broken and have had to be repaired.
- (f) Four blankets have been burnt by teargas.
- (g) One carpet has been burnt in one corner.
- (h) Curtains have holes in them.
- (i) The wooden door of one of our wardrobes has been damaged, apparently by a rubber bullet. Because the wardrobe is of good wood, it will be expensive to repair properly.

11. Needless to say, these experiences which I had were reported to the Synod of the Diocese, which was still in session, and this would account for the motion passed by Synod. I was not present at the time the motion was passed.

12. I do not know who was responsible for the attack on me and my family which is described in this letter. The evidence is, however, reasonably clear that members of the South African Police must have been actively involved. I do not know what other people in Sharpeville at the time had the means for firing teargas canisters or rubber bullets. The large police truck which I describe was obviously involved in the proceedings. Further, I understand from my cousin, Thomas Ntsoke, who was with us on the night in question, that he saw police vehicles outside our house at the time that the teargas canisters were fired.
13. I accordingly hereby lay a charge of assault and malicious injury to property against the parties responsible and request the South African Police to investigate the matter so that criminal proceedings can be instituted.
14. I appreciate the concern of the Minister of Police in referring the matter to you for investigation. I have shown Captain Horn the damage to my house and my property. I request that active steps be taken by the police to repair the damage or to compensate me. In the hope that something positive will be done, I do not propose, at this stage, to send any formal letter of demand to the police.
15. My reference book number is 1-4459502-8.

Yours faithfully

REV TEBOGO GEOFFREY MOSELANE



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