

BOB

About the end August or early September 1963, I wrote to the Minister of Justice, Mr. B.J. Vorster, and asked if he would see me in connection with my son, who had been arrested at Rivonia, and was being detained under the 90-day law in Pretoria Local prison.

Within a couple of days I received a phone call from Mr. Vorster's private secretary, making an appointment for him to see me. Girlie and I motored over to Pretoria. She waited in the car outside Union Buildings, while I went inside to keep the appointment, fixed for 11 a.m.

Vorster was most cordial. We had a short chat about parliament, during which he said he was disgusted with the cowardice and weakness of the parliamentary opposition. Then he opened a file and handed me a document, explaining that this was the statement made by Bob to the police. It was a fairly long document, and Vorster left me to read it alone.

It was a fairly detailed story of Bob's political career, most of it about his activities as a student at Wits University. The brief reference to Rivonia merely stated that he had been invited there as a lawyer to explain the 90-day law. As far as I could judge, there was nothing in the statement which incriminated any of the other detainees or provided information which could implicate anyone else. Vorster's only concern was that youngsters at the "liberal" English-language Universities were "exposed" to the propaganda of communists "like that Slovo", and he said he was determined to protect "decent" boys from such "evil influences".

I then raised three matters with him. The first was a plea to release Bob from detention. This he refused, saying that he could not interfere with the Attorney General, who was preparing charges, and that "justice will have to take its course". He added that he had chosen an excellent and fair man as prosecutor - Dr. Percy Yutar.

My second plea was that Bob be allowed law books and all the necessary reference material to enable him to continue with the revision of Gardener and Lansdowne legal handbook, on which he was engaged when arrested. This he agreed to do. He said he was seeing the Commissioner of Police immediately after me and would instruct him to see that Bob was given all reasonable facilities to do the work.

My third plea was that he should allow all 90-day detainees to have reading matter and writing material. Despite all my arguments, Vorster remained adamant, saying that the remedy lay in the hands of each detainee, who could end his detention by making a satisfactory statement.

I was with Vorster for over an hour. As I left, I passed the Commissioner of Police, going in.

About 7 - 10 days later, I learned that Bob had not been given the law books, etc., and knew nothing of my arrangements with the Minister. I immediately phoned the Minister's office to ask why. Within minutes the Johannesburg Special Branch phoned Shirley, telling her to bring all the required reference material and that she could go over to Pretoria to see Bob at once.

I went with her and we duly saw Bob, etc. etc.

Alex Hepple
Alex Hepple.

London.
21/11/69

Statement by Josephine Hepple

On April 23, 1964, Walter Sisulu, under cross examination in the Rivonia Trial, made a statement to the effect that the time might come when " Hepple will be tried..... " Very late that night (it may have been a night or two later) Adv. Bram Fischer and his wife Molly appeared on our doorstep.

The purpose of their visit was to ask us to get a message to Bob as quickly as possible to the effect that the accused and Sisulu, in particular, had been trapped in cross examination into making such a statement. If he had refuted the question it would have made nonsense of all his evidence, but he wanted Bob to know that these were not his real feelings

Bram Fischer, himself, was extremely perturbed that such a statement had been wrung from Sisulu - and repeated over and over again that he and the accused had the highest regard for Bob's integrity, and wanted him to know this without delay, and also the circumstances under which Sisulu gave such an answer.

After hearing this from Bram, we told him that we had received ~~messages~~ from Bob and Shirley that they had been badly received and treated by some of the leading white South African refugees in London. Bram was most upset and said : "They must be mad." He then told us that Sisulu was writing directly to Bob from prison explaining the whole matter and that the letter was being smuggled out and would be sent to Bob in London.

Josephine Hepple

Josephine Hepple

*26 November 1969
London.*

Note: Whilst pasting up the cuttings on Rivonia, I felt that it was only right that the above statement, as I recalled the facts, should be made by me.

Josephine Hepple

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