

A amended by BH 2/9/05

SYNOPSIS OF TWO INTERVIEWS WITH BOB HEPPLER

Date: 06 and 19 July 2005
Venue: Professor Sir Bob Hepple's Offices, Cambridge University, UK
Present: Garth Benneyworth (Site Solutions) GB
Bob Hepple (BH)

1. BACKGROUND

These interviews were initiated by GB and took the form of informal discussions between BH, GB and NW, who attended the first interview during which BH provided GB and NW with a Photostat copy of a contemporaneous account that he wrote in 1964.

The second round of discussions opened around this written account: RIVONIA: THE STORY OF ACCUSED NO. 11.¹ GB outlined to BH that he wished to build upon this account, as in GB's view, this formed the essence and foundation of BH's story of his experiences.

BH explained that in early 1964, while the Rivonia Trial was in progress, he had been "asked by an ANC guy in London" to write down his experiences. When asked by GB who this person was, BH replied that it had been Joe Slovo.

BH had second thoughts about doing so as he had lost confidence in people to handle documents appropriately. Nevertheless he wrote the account and at some stage had shown it to Rusty Bernstein who, according to BH, agreed that he wasn't going to "quibble over the detail," as the general thrust of the article was correct. In recent times BH had also provided a copy of the account to Ahmed Kathrada who never commented on it directly but had apparently been quoted in a Mail and Guardian titled *Rivonia Man Cleared*, which exonerated BH.

The discussions opened around the 11 July 1963 police raid at Liliesleaf. Bob Hepple described his role as that of a "gopher," a kind of a "messenger boy," as he had not been placed under restriction and being an advocate he could function as a basic lifeline. Hepple indicated that he was never an MK member but instead helped all three organizations: the SACP, the ANC and MK.

The following notes are not reflective of the flow of the discussions as many of the points raised were covered at different points during the discussions. All information relating to the various themes touched upon have been bundled into a narrative beneath the respective headings.

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2.1. PARTY MEMBERSHIP & ACTIVITIES LEADING UP TO THE 1960's

2.1. Orlando, Sophiatown and Moscow

When he was 18 years old Hepple participated in some form of protest related activity in Orlando, Soweto. A concert was used as the cover, but the police subsequently arrested him, along with some others, and charged them with illegal squatting.

In 1954 Bob Hepple (who was President of the Wits SRC) attended a conference of the International Union of Students in Moscow in the capacity of a NUSAS representative.

Hepple had traveled to Moscow, flying from Johannesburg to Amsterdam, and then via Vienna in an Aeroflot flight to Moscow, where he stayed for about a week and attended events at Moscow University. He found it rather exciting but in a sense some of the answers by the Russian hosts to his questions lacked depth; when enquiring why Beria had been assassinated Hepple was told "because he was an enemy of the people."

This trip did not seem to attract immediate police attention but later, when he sat an oral Afrikaans examination for his BA Degree, Hepple was unsettled by being asked by Prof. Pienaar, "Why are you a communist?" Another one of his lecturers, Abel Coetzee, aggressively enquired, "What were you doing in Moscow.?"

During the same period, Hepple, as part of his activities linked to the Students Liberal Association and the Congress of Democrats Youth Branch (of both of which he was Chairman), participated in protest related activities in Sophiatown and elsewhere.

He was recruited into the SACP by Harold Wolpe in 1954, but after the Russian invasion of Hungary, Kruschev's exposé of Stalin and his own disillusionment with the CP leadership, Hepple dropped out of Party related activities and "drifted off." He immersed himself in the work of SACTU and the black trade unions, and in defending ANC, PAC and CP members in political trials.

In 1960 during the State of Emergency, when most of the leaders were detailed or had fled or were in hiding, Hepple had been concentrating on SACTU related activities. Bram Fischer approached him and said something along the lines that "we are in a desperate state," and during this discussion, recruited Hepple back into helping the Party re-establish itself.

2.2. Victory Park Meetings

Bob Hepple stayed in Victory Park just after he married in 1960 and his home was used for political meetings. These took place in the evening and were attended by various groups of people. Hepple did not normally attend the meetings which took place behind closed doors, but merely facilitated them. During 1961 some of these were attended by Nelson Mandela who was staying in various safe houses in and around Johannesburg. Hepple would collect Mandela at a designated point or prearranged place such as a street corner. Mandela would disguise himself as a chauffeur and drive Hepple around or be driven by Hepple in a covered vehicle to and from the meetings.

The police raided this house from time to time.

2.3. Sekukuniland

During the period 1962-1963, Bob Hepple undertook cases which were referred to him by Shulamith Muller, concerning defendants living in the rural areas. This involved travelling to Sekukuniland to meet and represent the defendants, who had been involved in acts of armed resistance to the apartheid government. Due to the severity of repressive measures and the fact that many of the cases were located in remote areas, far from the cities, Hepple found that many of the detainees had been "horrifically treated" by the police.

3. THE MOVE TO ARMED STRUGGLE

"By 1960 MK had become inevitable."

In December 1960 a secret conference was held at a house in Emmarentia, which Hepple rented for a month in order to facilitate this event, which lasted for a day or two. The informal meeting was attended by approximately 30 – 40 people drawn from various places including the Cape and Natal and included Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela. Discussions revolved the need to move to armed struggle as all other avenues were closed, a position supported by Sisulu and Mandela.

4. NELSON MANDELA

4.1. Period Prior to Mandela's Arrest

Hepple had first gone to Liliesleaf when Nelson Mandela "was on the run" and he functioned as part of the support team to Mandela. Joe Slovo asked Hepple to drive Mandela to Liliesleaf which he did and there he met Arthur Goldreich.

According to Hepple, it was widely believed that the CIA "had a man in Durban who tipped off the police as to Mandela's movements. This led to his arrest."

4.2. Mandela's 1962 Trial

During the 1962 trial of Nelson Mandela, Joe Slovo, who had been acting as a legal advisor to Mandela, was placed under a banning order restricting his movements to the Johannesburg area. As the trial was being held in Pretoria, this prevented Slovo from assisting Mandela.

. Harold Wolpe telephoned Bob Hepple and explained that it was considered essential that Mandela have someone that he could trust and act as a channel to the underground. Given these factors, and the fact that unlike Wolpe and Bram Fischer he was not a banned person, Hepple agreed to assist.

Hepple's role was that as an advisor on legal points and during discussions both he and Mandela assumed that "all was bugged." They also worked together on Mandela's moving closing speech at the trial. Consequently they wrote down key points and read these, as opposed to verbalizing the issue, as a counter measure against listening devices. That their meeting room was bugged was subsequently confirmed by the police when interrogating Hepple during his 1963 detention. They made references to points raised in his discussions with Mandela that they could have only learnt from bugging the room.²

According to Hepple, he was "Mandela's "only contact" with the outside during this period and he relayed information between Mandela, and the underground leadership. Mandela asked Hepple if Rivonia was clean and asked him to relay his instruction that all his papers and journals stored at Liliesleaf were to be destroyed. Mandela apparently said: "Please tell them to get rid of the documents." This request came shortly before Mandela was taken to jail to start serving his sentence. Hepple relayed this message to Joe Slovo and probably also to Bram Fischer. He believed that Arthur Goldreich was then tasked to clean up Liliesleaf.

At some point during his interrogation Swanepoel, van Zyl and another police officer told him that they had a statement from an informant that Bram Fischer was the head of the underground, and that Slovo, Wolpe and Hepple were his "chief lieutenants", which Hepple said was "complete nonsense".

Hepple tried to keep out of the limelight and avoid unwarranted attention from the police but soon became known to them. He only returned to Liliesleaf after being asked by Joe Slovo to join the secretariat in late 1962.

5. OPERATIONS

5.1. MK

"My understanding was that MK would limit itself to small symbolic acts of sabotage, acts which would draw attention. I became aware that people who were disappearing were going for military training."

"The first operation went wrong. We didn't know anything about operations."

"My take was that they were getting a bit out of touch. It was the time of Che and Cuba."

5.2. System of Police Raid Alerts

² During his interrogation the police made direct references to matters that he had discussed with Mandela, the inference being that they could only have learnt this information from bugging the room.

A system of alerts was devised to warn people that a police raid was about to happen. The police were known for raiding at night, usually at around four or five o'clock in the morning. Consequently someone was positioned within eyesight of the Grays. When the vans and cars disgorged themselves from the Greys, this observer then phoned key people with the code, such as "The Russians have landed on the moon", the warning signal that a raid was on its way.

The era was characterized by continual police raids on Africans living in domestic quarters, many of which were Pass Law related. People were continually woken up by the police at night and had their staff dragged outside onto the street or their domestic worker's boyfriend's being discovered on the premises and arrested.

5.3. Radio Freedom

Hepple was aware of the existence of Radio Freedom. He attended a Secretariat discussion which involved planning for an appropriate site from which to broadcast. The Secretariat was aware of the risk that the authorities could obtain a triangulated fix on the transmitter, thus compromising any safe house where it might be operated. Consequently it was decided to use some form of mobile van for the transmission. As for the actual broadcast by Walter Sisulu on 26 June 1963, "I heard about it after it happened."

6. THE FUNCTION OF LILIESLEAF

"It was the Headquarters of the whole underground movement and a place where meetings were held. It was a venue for main discussions, a place of refuge and where the whole leadership could meet."

Hepple only became associated with events at Liliesleaf after Nelson Mandela's trial in 1962. He knew that the farm was a place of hiding and before Mandela's arrest had driven him to the farm.

7. CEDRIC

The code name Cedric applied to the central leadership at Liliesleaf while the code name Natalie referred to Natal.

Hepple received letters in his chambers which on occasion contained a second letter addressed to "Cedric from Natalie" inside the main envelope. The messages would be written in a book code using a combination of letters and numbers. Hepple knew that letters addressed to Cedric were intended for "these guys at Liliesleaf" whom he described as "those guys out there." He would then pass these letters over to Bram Fischer and Joe Slovo or would himself transmit them to the intended recipients. This was easy enough to do as the three advocates had their chambers in the same building and thus were accessible to each other.

8. FIREARMS

During early 1963 Ahmed Kathrada found a rifle, concealed beneath a bed.. This was in contravention of a strict rule that forbade the possession of firearms at Liliesleaf. Consequently Kathrada reported his discovery to the Secretariat, which comprised of Walter Sisulu, Rusty Bernstein, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki and Bob Hepple. Mbeki responded that he was not willing to go to prison again and that he was prepared, "to shoot it out if the police come." However he was censured for this and took it "personally."

9. THE SECRETARIAT

Bob Hepple described the Secretariat as an "operational body" which serviced the central committee of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the national executive of the African National Congress (ANC). "It was an operational secretariat which dealt with day to day issues".

Hepple recalled that during the period shortly before the police raid, there were tensions. One of the causes was the perception that the High Command was subverting the political organizations and was "in a position of total control."

10. OPERATION MAYIBUYE & THE RAID

10.1. Saturday, 6 July 1963

"This was the era of Che (Guevara) and Cuba, which was incredibly influential. There were those who believed that "a flame would ignite the masses" and that the time was ripe for a revolution to be ignited in South Africa.

A meeting, attended by between six and twelve members of the central committee, which he attended as a member of the Secretariat, was held at Liliesleaf inside the main house on 6 July 1963. Arthur Goldreich was not present.

Those present included:⁴

- Govan Mbeki
- Walter Sisulu
- Ruth First
- Rusty Bernstein
- Bram Fischer
- Ahmed Kathrada
- Raymond Mhlaba
- Bob Hepple

The discussions centered on Operation Mayibuye, a plan which had been produced by Joe Slovo and Govan Mbeki. Slovo had already had left South Africa to persuade the ANC leadership in Dar to endorse the plan, which had not yet been approved by the internal structures.

⁴ Joe Slovo was also a member of the Secretariat

Consequently the debate was heated and divisions emerged during the several hours of discussion which followed.

Govan Mbeki who had been enthused by the Peasants Revolt in the Eastern Cape and Sekukuniland was pushing the plan and "was gung ho for it."

However there were others opposed to it.

Rusty Bernstein had "serious political objections." Bernstein was of the view that "we were not ready for this yet and that these discussions needed to be further pursued." Bram Fischer expressed his view that, "for practical reasons this plan was mad – it would unleash unprecedented police repression." Fischer disagreed with the plan and the way its promotion abroad was being conducted; he "was incandescent that Slovo and Marks had not obtained internal sanction before their departure."

Ahmed Kathrada was also opposed to the plan, along with Hepple, who recollected being very worried by it.

Hepple shared the view that the internal organizational capacity of the various organizations such as the trade unions and political movements required focus and needed to be built up. Defence units within the townships and guerrilla units in the rural areas needed to be organized and that the ANC should organize these so that the people could defend themselves and be ready to act, when the time came.

However Walter Sisulu's position of the matter appeared ambiguous. Hepple's recalled that Sisulu seemed to hover during the debates surrounding Operation Mayibuye and that his "position did not appear clear."

Time ran out before consensus could be reached and it was decided that a follow up meeting was necessary. As no alternate venue was available, it was decided to meet again on 11th July at Liliesleaf, "for the last time." According to Hepple this was to be meeting of the Secretariat and not a meeting of the High Command.

10.2. Thursday, 11 July 1963

On the morning of the 11th Ruth First "came to my house with messages for me to give to the guys" at Liliesleaf. These were verbal messages which Hepple was to memorise and then relate to the recipients. A discussion was held around the importance of getting the SACP and ANC "on board" in relation to Operation Mayibuye. Ruth First joked that, given the prominence played by the High Command, "we were now under a military dictatorship." Hepple expressed his "unease about the way that things were being done," but First was of the view that at least something in the sense of stronger action was being proposed.

Hepple was apprehensive. "That morning an Indian guy came to my chambers and said that he has a message for Cedric. I fobbed him off as I wanted to check him out". The man was in his 50's but Hepple did not recognize him, nor could he remember his name, if indeed he had introduced himself, and Hepple had a strong suspicion that something was seriously amiss with this unannounced visitor.

Furthermore, "Rivonia was leaking. A few weeks earlier some guys who had stayed there were arrested and it would be only a matter of time before the police broke them.

Hepple had also heard that at some stage five MK operatives who had received military training in China stayed at Liliesleaf on their return to South Africa. Thomas Mashifane had also on occasion walked into the thatch cottage while meetings were in progress.

"By July 1963 it was clear that the SAP were getting on top of things." There had been a legion of security lapses over time, so it was inevitable that they would soon find the farm. Apart from which, "We were total amateurs," which according to Hepple, was compounded in some way by the personalities of the people involved. "You cannot cross both worlds."

There had also been a recent breach of security, involving Arthur Goldreich's cousin who had been invited by Goldreich to Liliesleaf. During what was probably a meeting of the Secretariat inside the thatch cottage the cousin burst in and he would have seen both blacks and whites sitting around a table holding discussions. Given the climate of the time, it would have been obvious to this cousin that what was taking place inside the cottage could not have been a "normal event."

Consequently Hepple took an unusual back route to Liliesleaf, making sure he was not being followed, taking evasive action en route. He approached the farm using a circuitous route, travelling from the opposite direction of Rivonia down Rietfontein Road from the west.⁵ His alibi, should something go wrong, would be that he was meeting with Walter Sisulu, to whom he would claim to be offering legal assistance..

Whilst driving down the driveway towards the farm buildings Hepple passed the car of a dentist traveling up the drive, who then left the property. Hepple arrived at 15h00 to find the other members of the Secretariat already there. Both Hepple and Kathrada questioned Walter Sisulu about this dentist and why he had been allowed at Liliesleaf, given the need for security and secrecy. Hepple spoke with Kathrada about this strange visitor who had arrived at his chambers and Kathrada confirmed that he too had received a garbled message dealing with Cedric.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the impact that the 90 Days arrests had inflicted and to follow on the discussions around Operation Mayibuye. Hepple had never seen the document and only knew what had been discussed about it the previous Saturday..

After exchanging pleasantries everyone took their seats, and the meeting in the cottage commenced. A ten minute discussion ensued about "practical things." Rusty Bernstein had made some prior notes about the points he wished to raise during the discussion about Operation Mayibuye and these may have been reduced to fairly minute script on a small piece of paper.

Rusty Bernstein held the Operation Mayibuye document on his lap so that he might refer to it but no sooner had he started raising his objections to the plan when a dry cleaning

⁵ Hepple was driving his Vauxhall, which although his, was still registered in his fathers name. Consequently the police hounded his father as a result of his car being associated with Liliesleaf.

van, bearing the logo Trade Steam Pressers, was observed through the front window entering the driveway, car park area of the farm. Bernstein remarked, "Oh my God. I saw that van opposite the police station this afternoon."⁶

Govan Mbeki snatched the Mayibuye plan from Rusty and shoved it into the stove or the chimney. In the midst of this Thomas Mashifane knocked on the door, bearing a parcel of sorts. Hepple told him to, "Go and see what that van wants," before closing the door and then moved over to the window where he, "helped three of the guys out of the window." These three attempted their escape; they were only ones in the cottage who were disguised. Rusty Bernstein was entitled, despite his house arrest order, to be out of his home in the daytime and Raymond Mhlaba who was a large man, "didn't move quickly."

It is possible that while all of this took place inside the cottage Bernstein used matches to burn his notes in the ashtray and these were the ashes later found by the police.

Those left in the cottage then froze and Kennedy entered the room. He recognized Hepple and said, "Advocate Hepple?"

By the time they were led outside the place was piling up with police with dogs and Dirker, who was in the process of arresting and searching Walter Sisulu, and when seeing Hepple, Bernstein and Mhlaba, made the upbeat statement, "Oh heppy, now we have got you all."

The captives were then held in the vans for some three hours during which time they were respectively taken from the vans and escorted around the property and shown various things, such as the rooms and their contents. When being taken from the van Hepple saw Colonel Venter, but he never saw General Van Den Bergh on the property. Hepple never saw Arthur Goldreich who, "wasn't put in the van with me." When Dennis Goldberg was put into the van, "this was the first time that I saw him."

11. 90 DAYS DETENTION

Hepple remembered Dirker as a bungling policeman. "Dirker worried me when I was in jail." He was essentially a dishonest policeman who threatened Hepple that if they wanted to, we (the police) can give evidence that we found it (Operation Mayibuye) on you."

Hepple recalled making three statements whilst in detention. The first was an initial "exculpatory statement" which the police brushed aside.. They then subjected him to continual interrogation over three days and nights. Although he was not physically assaulted he was kept standing for long periods, not allowed to go to the toilet, and subjected to psychological abuse such as Russian roulette with a pistol on the table:"Would you like his or the rope?"

Hepple was interrogated by three policemen of whom the main two interrogators were Swanepoel, who played the "hard guy" and Van Zyl who acted out the "soft guy role."

⁶ Hepple recalled that in all, only fifteen minutes had passed since his arrival and the raid.

The third, Kotze, was a smooth talker who would on occasion enter the room and "assure me that he wanted to help and that he would get me out of here."

At the end of this interrogation Hepple then made a second statement, in which he incriminated himself. This statement was tape-recorded and he later signed it. Some time later, towards the end of his detention, when pressure was being put on him to become a state witness, a third statement along the same lines as the second statement was typed out, but he did not sign this. It was about eight pages long. Hepple received a copy of this third statement and he gave it to his wife, who in turn passed it on to Bram Fischer.

During his detention Hepple was taken by the police to Percy Yutar's offices where Yutar informed him that, "You can save the Jews of South Africa." Yutar promised that if Hepple became a state witness then he would release him. Coupled with this offer was the threat, "You are all going to hang."

While undergoing 90 days detention, Hepple managed to discuss Yutar's offer with Rusty Bernstein, and Nelson Mandela. Mandela's view was that if Hepple could get out then he should but that such a course of action would be politically damaging to him. His view was that this was a personal decision for Hepple to make. After his release Hepple discussed three possible options that he might take with Bram Fischer. The first involved accepting Yutar's offer but then leaving the country to avoid testifying; the second - refusing to testify when once in the witness box and the third, when in the witness box to become a witness friendly to the defence, thus blunting Yutar's tactics. Fischer consulted the accused, and at a subsequent meeting told Hepple that the only viable alternative was leaving the country..

At some point during his detention, Kotze came into Hepple's cell and informed him that the police had found everything at Rivonia. He also heard from Lt. Van Wyk that a firearm had been found at Liliesleaf but he was unable to ascertain with any certainty if this was true.

Hepple managed to initially keep a "jail diary" but this was discovered during a raid on his cell and confiscated. He never saw it again.

12. 10 MOUNTAIN TERRACE & REPUTATION SLANDER

According to Hepple any suggestions made by Swanepoel that he had pointed out Mountain Rise to the police was "a wicked lie" and perjury, committed by this policeman. "I did not take the police there." According to Hepple this was another example of the police spreading stories that smeared people's reputations. "Swanepoel was such a shit" to suggest that Hepple had done this. Hepple had not known the Kreels, but he had attended meetings at the cottage, a fact he did not deny when questioned after the cottage was discovered..

Walter Sisulu had written to Hepple shortly before the verdict and sentencing, apologizing for any smear on his character and affirming that he did not believe that Hepple had pointed out Mountain Terrace, and that the description of him as a "traitor" was very far from Sisulu's view of him. Ahmed Kathrada also apologised for a statement

about this in his *Letters from Prison*, and gave an interview to the Mail and Guardian in 2000 saying that Hepple had been a worthy comrade and friend.

Over the years Bob Hepple has brought legal action against various persons who have stated that he betrayed his colleagues. Most recently he had agreed an out-of-court settlement with the publishers of a book by RW Johnson, leading to a public apology and payment of a substantial sum to the Canon Collins Educational Trust for SA.

13. ESCAPE FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Bram Fischer played a role in organizing Hepple's escape. On "the day that Kennedy was assassinated," Hepple and his wife left Johannesburg, being driven to the Bechuanaland border by Babla Saloojee, who some time later apparently during interrogation by Swanepoel was dropped from the 6th floor of the police building and died.. They arrived at a village which was divided by the international boundary fence but which had a ladder for crossing purposes. The local ANC in Lobatsi had been forewarned to expect two escapees, so the Hepple's found a land rover waiting for them on the other side of the village. The driver may have been Fish Keitsing.⁷

The Hepple's then hid in house in Lobatsi before reporting to the Protectorate authorities, a few days' later. They hired the same plane that Wolpe and Goldreich had used to fly to Tanzania. The pilot was a, "real Biggles type," who had once worked as Tshombe's pilot in the Congo. When they took off the pilot radioed Johannesburg air control, which seemed strange, and they landed in Northern Bechuanaland where they were accommodated in a cell in the local police station. This was because the white residents were extremely hostile to their presence and may have had South African police informants within their midst. There was an initial delay in leaving as some elephants had "buggered up the runway," but eventually they flew on to Mbeya with two other passengers.

14. SECURITY SERVICES COLLUSION

14.1 Britain and South Africa

Hepple was certain that there had been communication between the South African and British authorities on him before he sought asylum in Britain.

When he arrived in the UK, Canon Collins arranged with the Home Office to grant him a seven day refugee status permit. During December 1963, shortly before Christmas, Hepple was interviewed by officials from the Home Office, during which he was assisted by the solicitor Bem Birnberg. One of the possible pitfalls that he faced was that by having already received political asylum in Tanzania, the British were under no obligation to grant asylum to someone who had this from another country.

During these interviews it emerged that the Home Office had "a file full of South African issues that were linked to Rivonia." The Home Office official made specific references to

⁷ Hepple could not remember the driver's name. Benneyworth enquired if this might have been Fish Keitsing to which Hepple replied, "It could be, yes, that does sound familiar."

information that was contained in Hepple's statement, made whilst in detention, and that the British authorities could have only obtained this were they provided with the information by the South Africans. .

Hepple's deduction was that they had received this information from the South African Special Branch and that "MI 5 was passing information back to South Africa."

Three years later Hepple received British citizenship.

14.2. South Africa

As for ongoing surveillance over him once he took up residence in Britain, Hepple had read in the book *Inside BOSS* by Gordon Winter that he was being watched by a spy in Cambridge who was working for the Bureau of State Security (BOSS).

15. LEGACY OF LILIESLEAF & RIVONIA

"We drew the lesson that one must keep those engaged in legal activities separate from those in underground work and that it was a mistake to combine the roles."

The Rivonia Trial was inspirational in that, "The Trialists became symbols and martyrs for people to rally around."

The Liliesleaf raid "was a sign of defeat" and it "set the process back."

The armed struggle was "one leg of it" (the struggle).

16. PERSONAL REFLECTION

In response to a question by GB as to how BH would see his role being remembered in relation to Lilliesleaf: "If remembered at all, as someone who played a very minor role,."

"I was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

17. OTHER PERSONALITIES

17.1. Govan Mbeki

Govan Mbeki had been enthused by the Peasants Revolt which was characterised by armed resistance in the Eastern Cape and Sekukuniland. Mbeki had written a book on the subject. He was highly esteemed and regarded as a real intellectual by Hepple..

17.2. Walter Sisulu

Walter Sisulu was a "great human being" who used intuitive thinking, common sense, was a good strategist and "the man who influenced Nelson Mandela. Mandela would defer to Walter before initiating any action. Hepple remembered an occasion when

Sisulu returned from China and when asked by someone what China was like replied, "It's just like Sophiatown."

Hepple's view was that Sisulu seemed to hover during the debates surrounding Operation Mayibuye and that his "position did not appear clear."

17.3. Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi & Ahmed Kathrada

BH knew Andrew Mlangeni and Elias Motsoaledi well. He was aware that both of them had "disappeared" some time before the raid. While in detention BH passed Mlangeni in a corridor where he was sitting with some other prisoners and Mlangeni "showed me the scars on his legs" caused by electric shock torture.

In his view both Andrew Mlangeni and Elias Motsoaledi were unlucky to have been included as Rivonia Trialists and that Mlangeni, Motsoaledi and Kathrada should have been acquitted or at the very least, received lighter sentencing.

17.4. Bartholomew Hlopane

He may have been present at the meeting at Liliesleaf on 6 July 1963 during which Operation Mayibuye was discussed. The police subsequently broke him and according to Hepple, Hlopane was later assassinated by the ANC.

17.5. Alex Hepple

Bob Hepple's father had once led the South African Labour Party. In 1958 he lost his seat and then involved himself with the Textile Workers Trade Union. He edited a newspaper, *Forward*, and later ran the International Aid Defence Fund (IDAF) Information Service in London.

During the Treason Trials, Hepple senior was Chair of the Treason Trial Fund(and later the Defence and Aid Fund). During the trial the police baton charged a group of singing women protesting outside of the court. This prompted Hepple senior to accuse General Van Den Bergh of "malicious behaviour." Consequently, "Van Den Bergh had it in for my father." According to Gordon Winter, van den Bergh had instructed BOSS agents to spread disinformation about Bob Hepple.

While Bob Hepple was in detention his father met with the BJ Vortser and went to see him as a "concerned parent." He was told that the matter was in the hands of Yutar.

Guth Benjamin

12/05/07

7. THE TROJAN HORSE
11 JULY 1963

7.1. The Buildup

By June 1963, the state crackdown was relentless. Almost all the known political organisations, such as the ANC and the Communist Party, together with their activists had been placed under banning orders, restricted from almost all social and political contact with others, rendered incommunicado, detained, driven into exile, or serving prison sentences. The PAC resistance presented by POQO had been neutralized, numerous political trials were underway throughout the Republic and of the various methods exhibited by a growing security police state; one of these was increasing brutality.

The Republican Intelligence Department (RID) had been formed, with an express aim of neutralizing the Communist Party. Concurrent to this, an overhaul of the Security Police was underway, liaison between the apartheid regime and other white minority regimes in Southern Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies had been improved and intelligence sharing with the CIA, another avowedly anti-communist organization, became an established modus operandi.

Co-operation with the Portuguese extended into Angola and Mozambique and surveillance reports were passed back to the Republic about the movements of known South African communist's through these territories, such as Ruth First, Hillary Plegg, Ben Turok, VW Mkwai, Moses Mabida, Julius Baker, P Beylerveldt. F/

The Portuguese also assisted British Intelligence with monitoring and tracking the activities of MK. In 1961 Portuguese Naval Intelligence transmitted an intelligence report to London that Ghana was recruiting South Africans for political, military and sabotage training and was supplying funds to South African anti-government groups.

Some form of long distance co-operation also existed with Britain's Security Service and South African Intelligence; however much like a pair of estranged cousins, these two countries would have communicated beneath the surface of normal diplomatic structures.

It had become increasingly difficult for the members of the underground to operate. Informants were rumored to be everywhere and the pressure of living beneath the radar was becoming unbearable. At some point, a fatal mistake could be made, or the sheer weight of the security apparatus pressing down might find a leak in the dyke and bursting through, flood the underground networks.

Denis Goldberg recalled living under this terrible strain:

"What happens when you are working underground is that you're constantly working under the pressure of discovery; you're constantly having to think about it. It becomes a terrible anxiety...The pressure of being underground, it was wearing and wearing...and you're forced into making mistakes. This is what the pressure does, it forced you into mistakes. I am talking about the way the security forces pressure you.

And this is the lesson to be learnt from it, there is always too much to do, you're always in a hurry, the revolution must happen today, if not tonight, and so you make mistakes. What it plays on is, eventually you become so lonely, you give yourself away...It's like a boil. That is part of the psychology. That might not necessarily be the whole thing. But we don't train our people for this, you only learn it when it's too damn late."

There was a nuance of change taking place that the movement was too slow to detect and thus counter prepare itself. Some members had become complacent, lulled by a false sense of security, which appeared to be presented by the façade of the safe house. After all, once inside the perceived guerilla zone, the hostile world lay beyond its boundaries. The Security Police however had made the shift, but according to Minnie Sepel, the movement failed to do so, "still thinking that they (the police) were as thick as planks."

Kathrada recalled that when he arrived at Liliesleaf he thought:

"I'm living in another world. The comrades here were completely divorced, Soweto was just a few miles from here, they were completely divorced from reality. And drawing up very fancy documents. They had even forgotten that when MK was formed, no one had the idea that MK was going to overthrow the government. At the very most MK was going to be a pressure group. The goal remained that MK would be one of the pressure groups together with the political struggle, together with the international pressures, to force the enemy to the negotiation table."

According to Vivien Ezra, there were no internal security arrangements within the cells to resist infiltration. Structures just did not exist whereby suspicions could be reported – in short - there was no structured counter intelligence mechanism in use by the underground.

Naïve is a persistent word that creeps through into all the interviews, undertaken during the *Research Audit*.

Nothing illustrated this better than the fact that, although Mandela was captured in August 1962, Liliesleaf continued to be used by the allied organisations – the SACP, the ANC, MK, members of the Congress Alliance, SACTU unionists and members of the Indian political organisations, right up until the raid, eleven months later.

One would have thought, (although this may be a case of hindsight being perfect after the event), that once South Africa's most wanted fugitive, the 'Black Pimpernel' was captured, the movement would have tried to put as much distance between itself and Liliesleaf, given that Mandela had used the farm as a base for his operations.

He had been hunted all over Africa, yet it would appear that no one considered the possibility of his movements being back tracked to Liliesleaf, or that had he been under surveillance, then the farm was compromised before August 1962.

In fact, it appears that that the underground activities and the usage of Liliesleaf by the movement actually increased after August 1962 and continued until the raid in July 1963. It is possible that more underground leaders and operatives sought shelter in the safe house of Liliesleaf after August 1962, than at any other time in its history before this date – Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, Wilton Mkwai, Andrew Mlangeni, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, to name but a few.

Meetings of MK's High Command, the Secretariat and Central Committee of the SACP, probably the ANC's Executive and various committees such as Intelligence, Logistics, Transport, Housing and possibly other committees continued.

In fact one of these committees (logistics) was due to meet the night of the 11th the day the raid took place. This fact underwrites the following argument which is put forward in this *Research Report* that the meeting of the Secretariat inside the thatched cottage, was not in fact a meeting of minds on the property for 'one last time,' as is commonly believed and which has been widely written about. All of those comrades,

captured inside the cottage, have referred to the fact that because an alternative venue couldn't be found, it was agreed to meet at Liliesleaf 'one last time.'

Yet other parallel activities were occurring – such as this scheduled Logistics Committee meeting – which was planned to take place inside the main house, after the Secretariat wound up its affairs in the thatched cottage. Indeed, one of its members, Denis Goldberg was already sitting in the lounge reading a book when the verandah door swung open to reveal his nemesis bearing down on him.

Another, Arthur Goldreich, drove home and into the trap with a copy of Operation Mayibuye concealed behind his vehicle's hubcap. A third, Hilliard Festerstein, punctually walked into the house that night to attend the meeting which never happened - straight into the arms of the police. The Logistics Committee Chairman, Wilton Mkwai, narrowly avoided capture when he approached the farm, as scheduled, and saw the raid already in progress. A fifth member, Ian David Kitson, escaped due to a bout of flu which had kept him in bed while the reasons for Lionel Gay's non-show, remain unknown.

An attempt to relocate MK's core activities were made, hence the purchase of Trevallyn and the use of 10 Terrace Road in Mountain View, the Sepel residence in 99 Mons Rd and other safe houses that have not been identified to date. However, despite the unease which prevailed amongst certain members from the "cast of characters" such as Mkwai, Bernstein and Kathrada; Liliesleaf remained active until the final traumatic moments which then heralded in a long period of hiatus – a suspension - until 2002, when the Trust acquired core portions of the original farm and commenced a process of restorative work.

One of the dramatic elements in the story of Liliesleaf is the police raid that brought down the safe house and all those implicitly connected with it. From the moment that the cops sprang from their Trojan horse, an innocuous looking dry cleaners van, which had trundled down the driveway and into the car park, nothing would ever be the same again.

All those at Liliesleaf that day, with the exception of six children - three black and three white - were arrested. Together with other members of the liberation movement who were serving jail sentences or who were arrested elsewhere, they would stand trial in what became known as a universal branding event, a watershed moment in South Africa's history – Rivonia.

7.1. (a) Leakage

Rivonia was leaking. A few weeks before the raid some guys who had stayed there were arrested. It would only be a matter of time before the police broke them. By July 1963, it was clear that the police were getting on top of things. There had been a legion of security lapses over time, so it was inevitable that if the police hadn't already done so, then they would soon find the farm. Apart from which, "we were total amateurs," compounded in some way by the personalities of the people involved; after all, "You cannot cross both worlds," indefinitely.

People talk, even if it's through what they might consider to be innocent conversation. Apparently, there had been a recent breach of security, involving Arthur Goldreich's cousin who was invited by Goldreich to Liliesleaf. During what was probably a meeting of the Secretariat inside the thatch cottage Goldreich's cousin burst in. He would have seen both blacks and whites sitting around a table holding discussions. Given the political climate of the time, it would have been obvious that what was taking place could not have been a "normal event."

The concept of security had broken down. Too many people were using Liliesleaf. Its numerous visitors included people who were known to the Security Police and foreign intelligence agencies, such as Nelson Mandela, Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Lionel Bernstein, Harold Wolpe and many others. Hazel Goldreich recalled attending parties at the Slovo's house where some of the guests were "mixed couples." They detected the police sitting outside in parked cars observing the goings on. But no one took them seriously. "It was a game, it was a joke."

Lionel (Rusty) Bernstein described this osmosis from safe house to centre:

"Later people who had been overseas for military training would arrive back in Bechuanaland without any proper planning. The first thing we would know was that they were in Bechuanaland and wanted come back. So we'd bring them back and they would stay for a few nights...Rivonia came into sudden use in a way that had not been foreseen. So this place became a sort of centre, if you like because Sisulu and Mbeki were the two senior ANC people at large at that time...[Since] both of them were [also] participating on the High Command, they began to use it for MK High Command activities, both for keeping documents and holding meetings, and they were bringing people to their meetings who were not in the High Command, not living

underground and so on. So the place really changed from being a really closely kept secret to being something of a centre."

Even Thomas Mashifane, the foreman, could sense the inherent danger building up.

What are you folks doing? The way motor cars are coming in and out, the next thing the police are going to come."

But no one was prepared to listen. The question is, were others listening with a more sinister intent – had those with a little more intellect than the thuggery displayed to date by the proverbial Mr. Plod, finally caught up.

7.1. (b) Bugging Devices

By 1963, the Security Police (and presumably the RID) had acquired effective technology in an innovative way that facilitated covert bugging. They approached a commercial undertaking, the *Hearing Aid Centre*, with offices in the Harley Street Chambers, on the corner of Kruis and Jeppe Streets in central Johannesburg. Every two months they purchased about a hundred hearing aid microphones along with long life batteries that lasted about a month and which were imported from the UK. These RM 401 microphones and their batteries were small enough to fit into a human ear, making them ideal for a covert listening operation.

The battery lifespan was a critical factor. On one occasion the salesperson offered the police a different model of microphone (smaller yet more powerful but with less battery life) but they replied that, "they wouldn't be able to replace the batteries" – in other words, they could not get back to the unit to change a battery and required a month of listening time. This suggests that they were planting these units as unattended transmitting bugging devices, which functioned for the lifespan of the battery.

These bugs could be disguised and planted anywhere and were small enough to have been inserted into a pen and worn by an informant during a conversation; 3 or 4 such devices fitted into a matchbox. The microphone and transmitter would have worked at low frequencies, and the range could possibly have been as much as ½ km to a listening station, located within a line of sight.

The receiver for such a device could be very powerful. The signal wouldn't have had to be very strong and the microphone did not require a large opening, a pin hole would suffice, as in a standard hearing aid.

The listening station would have needed a sizable aerial, about 1 meter in length, erected up a tree or run along telephone wires, concealed inside a roof or tucked out of sight inside a caravan or masquerading as a car aerial parked nearby.

If hidden inside a building then the transmission distance would be reduced and to compensate, some form of aerial would be attached to boost the transmission. This could have been a shortwave radio, working at 10 MHz, provided there was a good receiver on the other side. If the transmitter was outdoors, the range would increase and the only limitations would be caused by background noise.

Such a transmitter could have picked up sound in an entire room, and the next as well. The bug could be concealed in a light switch and fitted by an electrician or plumber. It could be hidden beneath a car or anywhere else for that matter and camouflaged to resemble anything. Lightning or electrical activity would not have affected its performance.

The cops sent to purchase these items turned the procedure into '*something out of the movies.*' A phone call to check stock followed by a visit from two plainclothes policemen wearing raincoats and sometimes possibly hats. They paid with cash and did not require a receipt. Most of the units were sold in the period before the Rivonia arrests and as many as a 1000 units might have been supplied.

When news of the Liliesleaf raid broke in the media, the salesperson thought:

"So that's where all our microphones were going! Damn sure in my own mind – bloody hell, so that's where our microphones went!"

Who knows if Liliesleaf was bugged in such a manner?

7.1 (c) Informants

During the raid a policeman was overheard to say on the telephone – 'Ons het a jackpot', which has been taken to mean that the raiders had not expected to capture so many members of the leadership. Perhaps the rank and file hadn't, or perhaps this saying was in fact a confirmation to the recipient of the call.

It could only have been overheard by those inside the house – Goldberg or Arthur and Hazel and they would have all been in shock. No, the raid, in my view, was not some lucky chance – it was not a break for Mr. Plod.

The *Research Audit* uncovered the names of a number of people who supposedly acted as willing informants or agents that fed information into the security apparatus of the apartheid state, the Federal Intelligence Agency (Rhodesia), the CIA and Britain's Security Service. However, for the purposes of this *Research Report*, the narrative will confine itself only to persons who, by their own admission, were known informants and who directly compromised Liliesleaf and the people associated with the farm.

The fact that Tom Reiner, US Vice Consul may have played a role, given the proximity of his romantic interest who lived within a mile of the farm and whose son shared a school classroom with one of the Goldreich children, is a case in point. In 1948, Tom Reiner the newly arrived Vice Consul in India happened to be standing next to Mahatma Gandhi when an assassin shot the Mahatma. Reiner overpowered the killer and after numerous foreign deployments, including a stint in West Africa in 1961, appeared in Rivonia.

Coincidence?

At least one informant, according to his own testimony, already had the property under observation, a year before the raid – George Mellis, a ten year old who lived across the road with his parents who owned the Rivonia Caravan Park. He was a most unlikely suspect. When he cycled into the property or strolled down the driveway, no one even paid him a second glance. So much so, that the Goldreich children don't remember his name to this day.

Sometime in or around July 1962, while playing in the garden with the Goldreich children, George Mellis observed:

"A number of white and bantu males together in the thatched roof building next to the main house. These people were talking and some I saw shaking hands with each other. This seemed strange and I told my parents about it. On some occasions that I went there, I saw a lot of cars parked in the yard and on one occasion, I took the registration numbers of all the cars parked in the Goldreich yard and handed the numbers that I had written down, to the police at Rivonia."

Mellis seems to have been a rather pro-active little snitch. On another occasion he attempted to elicit information from Nicholas Goldreich,

"Once I asked Nicholas about the persons on the premises but Nicholas said that he was not allowed to tell me anything."

The *Research Audit* identified that the Rivonia Police Station commander did in fact pass on information to the Security Police about Liliesleaf and activities taking place there before December 1962. Presumably this included Mellis's information.

The *Research Audit* uncovered information that an investigation by the Security Police (and possibly other state agency's), had focused on Liliesleaf and the individuals and activities taking place on the farm. This covert investigation was already underway in December 1962, at the same time that Goldreich was in the Soviet Union. The station commander of the Rivonia Police Station was well aware of this investigation. When he received a summons for a parking offence from the Magistrates Court in Alberton, which had to be served on Goldreich, he held it back:

"Aangesien ek bang was dat dit met die ondersoek mag inmeng het ek die lasbrief nie laat uitvoer nie maar het die agterwee gehou."

[Because I was afraid that it might meddle with the investigation, I did not serve the summons but held it back.]

Suspicions have also been attached to the caravan park, owned by the Mellis family. July 1963 was a cold winter, so it was unlikely that anyone would go camping in sub zero temperatures. Yet, Denis Goldberg who came to Liliesleaf in May of that year recalled seeing a solitary caravan, standing in the deserted park. It left him feeling uneasy.

"There was only one caravan there most of the time, and this area was so far out of Joburg, it was deep countryside...And there was this caravan park, which was bare red earth with what I remember as one caravan. A very sleepy police station around the corner. I believe they said they watched the place, this is what I am basing it on....it would have been the obvious thing."

This caravan remained in position until the raid. Could it have functioned as a forward observation position for a surveillance unit? One will never know, but given the context, the likelihood is high. Was this caravan in fact a receiving station for micro transmitters, perhaps planted on the farm, or smuggled in by informants or agents of co-operation who bugged meetings which they attended?

This brings one to information which emerged during the *Research Audit* during discussions with Mr. Gavin Olivier, whose aunt - Mary Russell – lived in the caravan park at that time. Russell and her husband Sid were permanent residents in the park because they traveled extensively to the various game parks and this allowed them an easy going lifestyle. Their photographs depict their accommodation as being some sort of bungalow – different from the caravan that Goldberg recalled.

Mary Russell was an avid birdwatcher – a twitcher - who would gaze across the valley through her binoculars, watching the birdlife. In the period building up to the raid, she observed postal workers standing on ladders for long periods of time, ostensibly working on the telephone lines. However they also carried binoculars, which caught her attention and stuck in her memory. Why would anyone spend so much time repetitively repairing the lines and do so, standing on a ladder for hours on end with binoculars? Added to this were the mysterious bread delivery vans which parked inside their gates several times a week for the entire day.

"Strange," she said, "we don't have a shop which sells bread in the caravan park".

It was only after the raid that she shared the story with her family. She told them that "she knew something was going on across the road".

Russell was not the only person who saw workmen on the poles.

Paul Goldreich recalls that:

"I have to say I do have memories, believe it or not, of men working on telephone cables outside the farm. I used to with Nicholas spend a lot of time walking around the top area of the farm with the dogs and I can remember making a mental note that there were men at the top by the entrance of the house. I even have a vague memory of talking to these men on occasion."

Bread vans, solitary caravans, workmen on top of telephone poles with bino's. This brings us to another 'villain' from the "cast of characters" - the ubiquitous Bruno Mtolo, who later gained notoriety as the state's star witness, Mr. X, during the Rivonia Trial. Mtolo was an effective saboteur but to the detriment of those operatives who he later sold out, he came equipped with an excellent memory.

The question remains - when exactly did he sell out, only after his arrest or was his arrest in fact a cover which screened the possibility that he had turned some time before? The *Research Audit* has identified a possibility that Mtolo became an informer before his arrest. This possibility is based on two factors, his prior criminal history and Hazel Goldreich's instinct about him after a 'weird' experience at Lillesleaf.

Granted this evidence is only circumstantial, but then again - who knows?

Prior to becoming involved with MK, Bruno Mtolo was known to the police and no stranger to the inside of a jail cell. A recidivist criminal, he had done time for fraud, before being recruited into a Natal based MK cell by Ronnie Kasrils.

According to several retired security policeman from Rhodesia and the Republic, a modus operandi for recruiting informants at that time was to trawl in those criminals who could prove co-operative. Money and the chance of staying out of jail being a common, yet powerful motive.

Through a stroke of sheer misfortune for the movement, Mtolo got himself into Liliesleaf. Mtolo was supposed to go for technical training in Algeria but he missed his train and was taken to Liliesleaf by none other than Brian Somana – another suspected informer. Mtolo stayed over and missed his exit procedure altogether, so he was not sent out the country.

According to Billy Nair:

"If he had, it would have been a blessing in disguise, but he remained and he was taken to Rivonia and he saw the place. He was to recognise it later, He had a photographic memory, and he then used this very successfully..."

Hazel Goldreich recalled an encounter with Mtolo at Liliesleaf after he participated in a meeting which was attended by "top people". The meeting finished late so Hazel was asked to drive Mtolo to Johannesburg station. While they walked to the car, Mtolo was friendly but when getting into the car, he asked Hazel:

"Is your name actually Hazel? Is Hazel your real name or is this a name which you have been given?"

This immediately aroused her suspicions. She replied:

"No Hazel is my real name."

Mtolo probed further:

"But Mandela's name is David and so and so is called something else?"

He continued asking her a number of questions about people's names.

"And he was asking all sorts of questions, which made me feel uncomfortable because even if he was with the High Command, then he shouldn't have been questioning me. He didn't know what position I held or anything."

They set off into the night. Mtolo then asked her to divert into Alexandra Township, claiming he needed to call on some friends. *"Oh just turn into Alexandra Township."*

"I thought that it was not a good thing to do because it was nighttime. I shouldn't have been there but I went in. I thought he would just call in and come out again but he stayed there for about an hour and I remained in the car. I was afraid the police would come and they would want to know what I was doing at night in Alexandra Township. Eventually he came out and I took him to the station and when I got back to Rivonia, I said to Arthur "I don't know I have got an awful feeling about him, I really don't trust him; he shouldn't have been questioning me."

Arthur replied:

"Oh nonsense, he is very high up in Natal."

History would prove that Hazel's instinct was not amiss.

7.2. Thursday 11th July 1963

The meeting on Saturday 6th July at Liliesleaf deadlocked. Operation Mayibuye had not been approved. Far from it –deep divisions had emerged within the Secretariat and amongst members of the Central Committee over the plan. This rift needed to be resolved and the matter put to rest. The plan had to be either approved by the political structures, which hadn't happened; or sent back for further work. However, the next part of the problem was a practical one, where could the Secretariat meet and when. The matter had to be speedily resolved, yet the issue of a venue was becoming contentious and downright dangerous.

Given the concerns about security, there were a number of people who did not want to return to Liliesleaf. In fact some of the senior leaders, such as Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba and Wilton Mkwai no longer stayed at the farm, having moved over to Trevallyn; a small holding near Krugersdorp, recently purchased by Denis Goldberg under a fictitious name and which was to be used solely for accommodating the High Command and those immediately involved in its functioning. Goldberg had joined them at Trevallyn in between periods when he stayed at 10 Terrace Road, another safe house also used by Michael Harmel and Ahmed Kathrada.

However, an urgent message was received from Cape Town advising that Reggie September would soon be in Johannesburg, and arrangements needed to be made to smuggle him out of the country. September was already on a train, travelling in disguise in a 'whites only' compartment. Consequently he couldn't be housed at Liliesleaf, as this was to be shut down or Trevallyn, which was at the disposal solely for the High Command. There was no time to find alternate accommodation so September would be housed in Mountain View. Bram Fischer chaired the Accommodation Committee and he confirmed that given September's arrival, he now had no other suitable venue available for the meeting. This put paid to any idea of meeting in Mountain View to discuss Rusty's analysis of Operation Mayibuye with the Secretariat.

Kathrada recalled that Bob Hepple then said:

"Look chaps, we can't find another place, we'll have to meet here, and that will be the last time."

So Liliesleaf it would be.

Goldberg remembered that:

"They didn't have time to arrange a new venue, so we had to come back here, knowing that it was dangerous to come here. The decision had been taken, no more meetings at Rivonia. Yet we had one more, because of the pressure of Rusty's house arrest."

Bernstein was not in favour; he had house arrest restrictions, which placed him under great pressure. He had lost faith in Liliesleaf as an uncompromised venue:

"I don't even remember who convened the meeting. I know I didn't want to go to it. I was afraid of the place. It was Hepple who persuaded me. [He said] "Okay, you don't want to go to this place, just this one last time, Famous last words." Hepple was a renegade,

The next issue was timing, which day might be appropriate? Thursdays for the farm were delivery days. Produce from a variety of suppliers such as the butcher and grocer were delivered, dry cleaning was collected and dropped off, cars came and went - these goings on were an established routine. As these activities had doubled up as a screen for meetings before, Thursday it would be.

In order to negate recent government propaganda where Dr Donges had called for the Indian and coloured minority groups to support the white regime against the ANC, it was decided that Kathrada, being Indian, should issue a counter broadcast on Radio Freedom.

"It was then felt that someone from a minority group should respond to that, and that task was given to me. So I had drafted this broadcast, but we hadn't even reached the stage of recording it when we were arrested, and of course the text was discovered here."

Kathrada prepared a transcript and left it with Walter Sisulu when he moved to 10 Terrace Road. On the 2nd July, Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe visited Kathrada and attempted to tape record his speech but this proved unsuccessful.

Consequently on the 10th July 1963 at 20h00, Kathrada left his safe house and returned to Liliesleaf, to tape record his speech. Since he had been co-opted onto the Central Committee, he would be required at the meeting the following day. The night was bitterly cold and Kathrada slept early:

"My sleep deep and peaceful, with no sense of foreboding or any inkling that the events to follow will change not only my life, but also the country. I will return to that night many times in the years to come, every detail of it etched into my mind: the last night of freedom..."

Sunrise found Kathrada alone in the cottage. Arthur Goldreich left for work. Later in the day, Hazel took her two sons to collect a friend, Terry Hepker, who would stay for the night. Hazel was accompanied by Enith Kgotani, the domestic worker. Her Austin disappeared up the driveway.

That morning Ruth First visited Bob Hepple at his home. She relayed some messages which he was to memorise for CEDRIC, the code name attached to Liliesleaf and relay them 'to the guys' who would be there. They then discussed the importance of getting the SACP and ANC 'on board' in relation to Operation Mayibuye. Hepple expressed his unease about the way that things were being done, but First's view was that at least something in the sense of stronger action was being proposed. First joked that, given the prominence played by the High Command:

"We were now under a military dictatorship."

Nevertheless, Hepple remained apprehensive.

"On the morning of the 11th of July, a man came to my chambers. He was an Indian. I had never met him before. I can't remember now exactly what he looked like. He was well dressed – that's the image I have in my mind.

And he said to me, "I have got a message for CEDRIC from NATALIE." Now I knew that I regularly received letters addressed to me at my chambers. Inside was an envelope sealed from NATALIE for CEDRIC. And I knew these were for the leadership and I would deliver them personally to Liliesleaf Farm. And I wondered what was going on because CEDRIC was the codename for the center and NATALIE was the code name for the Natal district. And I knew these names 'cause on letters would come to my chambers addressed me. I would open them – an envelope - CEDRIC from NATALIE, and I would take them over.

Who was this guy? I had no knowledge of him. I fobbed him off. I said I don't know *what this is* about but I'll look into it and see....So I realized he was bringing some message. But I didn't know if he was genuine, he could have been a police spy... And I was deeply suspicious. I feigned ignorance and said I have to go out now and sent him away and said come back to me tomorrow morning. My idea being to make enquiries if anyone knew what this was about.

So the result, I was very worried and it was one of the things when I did go there that afternoon that I was worried about. So on my route there I was extremely nervous, I kept thinking maybe I am going to be followed."

Meanwhile at Trevallyn, Sisulu, Mbeki, Mhlaba and Goldberg left for the meeting, with Goldberg behind the wheel:

"...and the kombi had curtains in it to hide the fact that I was driving people like Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki around. Quite funny, on the way here from Trevallyn on that last visit to Liliesleaf farm for the next thirty or so years. We were in the Kombi coming here, and I think Ray Mhlaba must have said, 'Denis, what are we going to call the new place? At Trevallyn? And quick as a flash I said, we're going to call it SHUFISA and Walter said, 'Denis, it sounds like a Xhosa word, but it isn't.'

And I said it means, Supreme Headquarters United Front in South Africa, I mean Eisenhower had such a name, SHAFE, for his headquarters in Europe. It was just a bit of fun, but *serious* as well. Everybody laughed, it was hugely amusing, except for Walter Sisulu, had a lovely sense of humour, but always analytical. Never stopped analyzing. He said, 'But Comrade, it's a nice idea, but I don't think we yet have a united front in South Africa, therefore we can't use the name.'

Back at Liliesleaf, the morning passed peacefully, but just before 14h00 Kathrada noticed a strange car arrive. He peeped through the bathroom window and observed a well-dressed white man in his early forties step from his car and after casting a careful look at the buildings and surroundings, he headed towards the main house. However, no one was at home.

After a few minutes, he emerged and strolled over towards the thatched cottage. Kathrada stepped outside and enquired as to the nature of his business. It was Reeve Arenstein, a dentist and indirect relative of Arthur Goldreich, who had been requested to construct a false plate for Sisulu's mouth, in order to enhance his disguise. Sisulu had a prior plate made whilst staying at the Sepel's but this had caused him great discomfort.

Kathrada felt uncomfortable while he waited with the dentist for Sisulu to arrive. Arenstein was unduly curious and appeared nervous, continually looking at his watch and saying that he would be late for a golf appointment. At 14h40, Arenstein prepared to leave but just then, the Kombi trundled down the driveway.

So we came from Trevallyn... drove in, parked. I knew that Walter was going to have a plate made to cover his front teeth."

Both these photographs relate to Sisulu's capture. The photo on the left depicts Sisulu the morning after the raid while the photo (right) was released by Ilanga, a Natal based Zulu medium newspaper, in its coverage of the raid, and was presumably taken during the Rivonia era - most photographs of Sisulu prior to that, depict him without beard or moustache.

Goldberg walked over to the main house and settled into the lounge, which was the warmest room in the house. He had time on his hands, as the evening's meeting of the Logistics Committee was still some hours away. Goldberg settled into an armchair with Karl Jung's book, *Brighter than a Thousand Suns*, the story of America's atomic bomb project during the Second World War.

Meanwhile, Arenstein took a dental impression from Sisulu but as he worked, he kept asking Kathrada:

"Will there be much bloodshed in South Africa?"

His job finished, Reeve left after Bernstein arrived and passed Hepple driving down the driveway. Hepple had taken evasive action on route to throw off any tail and approached the farm via a circuitous route, from the opposite direction of Rivonia, down Rietfontein Road from the west. His alibi, should something go wrong, would be that he met with Walter Sisulu, to offer him legal assistance.

denies his appeal is a case that Hepple had been handling

When Hepple walked into the cottage he enquired:

"Who is this other car?"

Sisulu replied:

"Oh that was the dentist who is giving me a facelift."

"I know others including myself were mad, furious that this guy had just been invited there. We didn't know who he was."

Hepple told Kathrada about his suspicious visit that morning and Kathrada confirmed that he too had received a garbled message from someone who mentioned Cedric. After exchanging pleasantries, the six took their seats. The meeting had two purposes; to discuss the impact of the 90 Days arrests and to follow on the discussions around Operation Mayibuye. A ten minute discussion ensued about 'practical things.' Bernstein had made some prior notes critiquing Operation Mayibuye and reduced these into fairly minute script on a small piece of paper.

Bernstein held the Operation Mayibuye document on his lap so that he might refer to it and started his critique. No sooner had he commenced when they observed a dry cleaning van, bearing the logo *Trade Steam Pressers*, through a rear window coming down the driveway. It drove up and parked next to the house.

The Trojan horse was in position.

Lt. Van Wyk had pre-briefed his fellow raiders. The driver, a Sgt Kleingeld, wound down the window and spoke to one of the farm workers, asking him for dry cleaning that needed to be collected, adding:

"I want to speak to the Master."

The worker replied:

"There is nobody home."

Kleingeld reversed the van slightly.

Bernstein looked out the window and exclaimed:

"Oh my God, I saw that van opposite the police station this afternoon!"

Suddenly, the rear doors open, disgorging the police with their attack dog. The raider's initial focus was to encircle the main house, which merely bought a few moments for those, trapped inside the cottage. Govan Mbeki immediately snatched the Mayibuye plan from Bernstein. He tried to burn it but without matches it was useless so Mbeki shoved the plan into the stovepipe chimney. In the midst of this commotion, Thomas Mashifane knocked on the door, carrying a parcel of sorts. Hepple told him to, "Go and see what that van wants," before closing the door. However Detective Kennedy saw Hepple's arm in the doorway and sprinted towards the cottage, only meters away. Hepple moved towards the rear window where he, "helped three of the guys out." They were the only ones in the cottage who were disguised and this would incriminate them.

Mbeki, Sisulu and Kathrada attempted to run for freedom but it was too late – they were captured near the water tanks. The remaining three hoped to bluff their way out. Bernstein was entitled, despite his house arrest order, to be out of his home in the daytime. He immediately burnt his notes in the ashtray. Hepple would claim he was offering legal advice to Sisulu as his reason for being at Liliesleaf. Mhlaba who was a large man "didn't move quickly," and had little option but to remain.

They froze. Detective Kennedy opened the door and rushed inside:

"Stay where you are. You're all under arrest!"

Kennedy walked up to Hepple and with an excited sneer, he said:

"You're Advocate Hepple, aren't you?"

The three were then escorted outside.

Hepple recalled that by this stage, the place was piling up with cops and dogs. If so, this suggests that the dry cleaners van was the initial probe – the Trojan Horse. Once it had breached the gates and parked inside, its occupants would disgorge to secure the buildings while the main body, already in position on Rietfontein Road would then swoop in and overwhelm the farm, securing the perimeter with stopper groups.

Wilton Mkwai, who was to chair that evening's meeting of the Logistics Committee approached the farm and was the only member of the underground who saw what happened from an 'outside' perspective. His account, together with that of Hepple's, suggests that the raid did not only involve an innocuous dry cleaners van containing a dozen cops who seemingly, according to popular culture, were about to strike it lucky.

Instead the raid formed part of a much larger premeditated and planned operation, one that was based on a careful reconnaissance of the property and its visitor patterns over a period of time.

"Now this farm was bigger. When we come from the shop in Rivonia, we usually, there was a footpath outside the farm. There are bushes. When I was coming, I'm looking. We had two big dogs there. Hau! Where are these dogs? But I see nobody. I say, oh, perhaps they thought they want to frighten me. I wont go in there, I'll walk past – because in the middle there is another footpath – then there's the main gate. When I was going to this, still on the main road, Hau! I see a dog. There's this tall grass there. I saw nothing you know, moving. Perhaps I was not looking. Why is this dog already there? So I walked straight, main gate. Serious there, because there are tall trees. Stems as big like this.

When I was already inside I saw the dogs behind those stems. Hau. Dogs there, dogs here, dogs now. Ah, ah. There's something. But what is this something? I am not staying on the other side, they walk here when they go to shop. When I was going down, I saw other dogs near the barn, near the river. Mmm. Anyway there where cattle this side in the farm. Cattle – in another farm. So I jump the fence. Sort of driving these cattle up near now the gate – there, those stems – ha!

These dogs are having handlers. Somebody was handling them. There must be something there. But I move slowly with these cattle. The house is far away from the owner of the cattle. Then some bushes, when I walk fast now to Alexandra."

Mkwai's upbringing as a shepherd, together with his innate instinct, saved him that day. He had witnessed the encirclement of the farm by the police stopper groups with their dogs taking up position amongst the trees along the river and the boundaries. They were in position, ready to snare anyone else who might arrive at the farm, while their commanders took up a position beneath some trees inside the caravan park, within sight of the main entrance gate.

Outside the thatched cottage Dirker searched Sisulu and retrieved a document titled: *Africa Pledged to wipe out apartheid*. On seeing Hepple, Dirker looked up and laughed:

"O Heppy, now we have you all!"

Dirker retrieved two documents from Govan Mbeki; the first a cryptic message and the second a paper titled: *Incorrect to say Liberatory movement given to military methods*, while Kennedy found *An oath of allegiance*, on Mhlaba.

The suspects and farm labourers were then handcuffed inside the dry cleaners van, which served as a temporary holding area. Kennedy and Staff Sergeant Grobelaar went to search Room 12 where they found three small African children hiding in the room. Kennedy returned to the van and asked Thomas Mashifane who they were but Mashifane said nothing. Kennedy then took Mbeki to the room but Govan didn't recognise them. Kennedy searched the room in the presence of the children but found nothing of importance. Govan was then handcuffed most uncomfortably to a roof support in the dry cleaners van.

Back in lounge, Goldberg looked up to see Lt. Van Wyk swing open the veranda door and step inside, only metres away from where he sat. Goldberg leapt from his chair, grabbed his coat which contained his notes about weapons manufacture and quotes which he had received and made a desperate dash to reach a corridor toilet where he might flush them away. He was intercepted by another policeman barging in through the kitchen, overpowered in the entrance hallway and arrested.

"It was a disconcerting moment...Actually what I thought was, oh shit, we've been caught."

Bernstein and Hepple were placed in the back of a van with Thomas Mashifane and another farm worker, closely guarded by a constable with a vicious dog.

After some time, Hepple was taken back into the cottage. Dirker showed him some ashes in an ashtray and asked,

"What did you burn here?"

Hepple replied:

"I burnt nothing."

Dirker screamed:

"Don't Lie!"

Hepple was then escorted to his motor car – Dirker felt the engine and searched the car. Colonel Venter said to Hepple in Afrikaans:

"I'm really surprised to find you mixed up with these dangerous communists."

Dirker then took Hepple over to the storerooms in the outbuildings and showed him the roneo machine and other items, but Hepple denied all knowledge of them. Dirker then asked:

"When did you come here? Who asked you to come?"

Hepple refused to answer any more questions and was taken over to the van and painfully handcuffed to Kathrada. The dog handler continually provoked his German wolfhound to lunge at them and hurled vile abuse.

Meanwhile, at about 17h50, Arthur Goldreich drove down Rietfontein Road in his Citroen – TJ 50428. When he drew level with the entrance gate he noticed two men, wearing the hallmark raincoats of plain clothes policemen, standing beneath a tree in the caravan park, talking to each other. It wasn't raining and they weren't relieving themselves.

"And my first thought was Special Branch, and my second thought was I am late. I can't just drive by. Then the third thought of mine was how come the guy who's supposed to be guarding the gate is not there...and I came down the driveway, there were trees on either side and from behind the trees came some police

and some dogs. And they jumped on the motor car, and the guy with a pistol in his hand put the pistol to my head, and I heard some shout, 'moenie skiet nie!' So I switched off the engine and rolled down and came in towards the garage."

The farm was encircled. It was over. Arthur's car ground to a halt. He got out, hands raised above his head. Goldreich was promptly body searched and had his cash stolen, before being photographed by a police photographer. The cops screwed off his car hubcaps and retrieved a copy of Operation Mayibuye.

"And I was extremely angry...And I had another feeling, one was relief, because of this weight, and the other was anxiety...but really I mean it was horrendous."

At around 18h00, after each captive had been shown the contents of the outbuildings, Bernstein and Hepple joined Mbeki inside the laundry van. Bernstein, like Goldreich, was robbed of R65.00, when Dirker searched him. Goldberg was then brought out of the house, four policemen climbed into the van and they were driven off into the night. Govan Mbeki whispered to his comrades that Operation Mayibuye had been found and said:

"This is going to be high treason chaps."

Goldberg was taken outside, pushed into a police van and forced to sit on the floor.

"With this police dog, with its muzzle in my groin, and I'm hoping to God this Alsatian is tame. And the policeman would say to the dog, he'd just lift a finger, and the dog would look up. And I said, 'he's very well trained,' and he said, 'don't move too sharply because you're very exposed.'

ENDNOTES
THE TROJAN HORSE
11th JULY 1963

NASA, BLM / Box 22, Vol. 2, File 442

DO 195 / 2, SECRET, Ghana's relations with the Union of SA, 29 July 1960 – 1962

Denis Goldberg, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Minnie & Ralph Sepel, Interviews, 2005, See: LL / INT 4

Vivien Ezra, Interview, 2006, See LL / INT 6 / LOT 2 (a-k)

Bob Hepple, Interview, 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

Bob Hepple, Interview, 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

Lionel Bernstein, Interview; as quoted in SADET, 2004, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, p. 142

Ahmed Kathrada, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

All the information about these bugging devices was supplied by DS, who was the salesperson referred to, during a discussion with the author.

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NASA, Statement by George Mellis, 5 August 1963, NASA, NAN 52 / Box 8 / Vol. MS. 385.23

NASA, Statement by George Mellis, 5 August 1963, NASA, NAN 52 / Box 8 / Vol. MS. 385.23

Sgt Christiaan Fourie, Station Commander, Rivonia, Statement, 23 September 1963, See: NASA / NAN 52 / Box 8, MS 385.23

Sgt Christiaan Fourie, Station Commander, Rivonia, Statement, 23 September 1963, See: NASA / NAN 52 / Box 8, MS 385.23

Denis Goldberg, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Gavin Olivier related this to the author. Olivier is the nephew of Mary Russell who is since deceased

Gavin Olivier related this to the author. Olivier is the nephew of Mary Russell who is since deceased.

Paul Goldreich, email to author, 11 March 2007

Billy Nair, Interview; as quoted in SADET, 2004, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, p. 142

Hazel Goldreich, Interview, 2005, See: LL / INT 3, LOT 5 (a); and INT 3 / LOT 5 / Notes 1

Ahmed Kathrada *Memoirs*

Ahmed Kathrada *Memoirs*

Ahmed Kathrada, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Denis Goldberg, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Lionel Bernstein, Interview; as quoted in SADET, 2004, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, p. 142

Ahmed Kathrada, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Ahmed Kathrada: *Memoirs*

Interview and discussion with Bob Hepple, July 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

Ahmed Kathrada: *Memoirs*

Denis Goldberg, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Ahmed Kathrada: *Memoirs*

Hepple was driving his Vauxhall, which was still registered in his fathers name. Consequently the police hounded his father as a result of his car being associated with Liliesleaf.

Bob Hepple, Interviews, 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

Bob Hepple, Interviews, 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

Lt Van Wyk, statement, See: NASA / NAN 52 / Box 12 / MS 385.28

Bob Hepple, Interviews, 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

Bob Hepple, Interviews, 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

Detective Sgt JHJ Kennedy, Statement, 16 July 1963, See: NASA / NAN 52 / Box 9 / MS.385.24

Bob Hepple, 1964, contemporaneous account

Denis Goldberg, Interview, 2004, See: INT 2

Bob Hepple, 1964, contemporaneous account

Detective Warrant Officer CJ Dirker, Statement, See: NASA / NAN 52 / Box 8 / MS 385.23

Arthur Goldreich, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Arthur Goldreich, Interview, 2004, See: LL / INT 2

Detective Warrant Officer CJ Dirker, Statement, See: NASA / NAN 52 / Box 8 / MS 385.23

Bob Hepple, Interviews, 2005, See: LL / INT 3 / LOT 4 / Notes 1

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Denis Goldberg, Interview, 2004, See: INT 2



Preserving our history & heritage

Professor Bob Hepple QC
Clare College
Queens' Road
Cambridge CB3 9AJ

30-Aug-05

Dear Bob,

It was wonderful to meet with you back in July and I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity of listening to your narrative which I found reverting.

On behalf of the Liliesleaf Trust and Trustees I would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation for your invaluable assistance and participation in the Liliesleaf oral legacy history project, which in turn will make an invaluable contribution towards the Trust's aims of establishing a structural, oral and visual documentation of this unique historical site.

The material the Trust is gathering and sourcing will form part of the Museum, Struggle Library, Research and Archive Center's historic memoirs that will tell the story of the historic events and activities that took place at Liliesleaf.

The research process is focused around three core anchors, these being;

- The restoration of historic structures and buildings
- The acquisition of archival and related material
- The establishment of an oral and archival resource

The historical audit which has comprised structural, oral and archival research has yielded new information about the events and historic processes which not only took place at Liliesleaf but was also linked to the site.

We are aware that the nuances of history are best understood through recording and capturing at first hand the diverse experiences from the individuals directly and indirectly associated with Liliesleaf and the Rivonia Trial.

Liliesleaf Trust No: 4341/02

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Physical Walbrooke House, 37 Glenhove Road, Melrose Estate, Johannesburg Postal PO Box 10269, Rivonia 2128, South Africa

Trustees Mendi Msimang (Chairman), Riaz Meer, Professor Derrick Swartz, Tania Slabbert, Professor Benjamin Magubane, General Andrew Masondo, Adam Fleming (UK)

Thus the aim of the Trust is to record and capture as many first hand memories of those directly or indirectly involved or affected by this historic site. This includes family members such as the children of those involved, as their perspective and experience form part of the Rivonia Legacy, narrative and historic memoir.

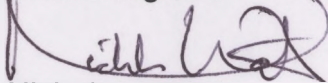
As a result of recent discussions between you and Garth Benneyworth, we would welcome the opportunity to conduct follow up interviews. Our intention is to capture your historic narratives for posterity and catalogue this in the eventual archive facility, which will form part of the Struggle Library, Research and Archive Centre.

We would wish to film these interviews and then archive them into the Centre, where it will form part of the overall historic 'memory bank' which we are currently compiling. Would you be available for an interview in Britain during the period towards the end of October/ beginning of November 2005?

We have asked Gareth Bennyworth to contact you directly to discuss the aforementioned further with you.

Once again on behalf of The Liliesleaf Trust I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to you for your participation in this historic process.

Warm Regards



Nicholas Wolpe
CEO

Interview held. Cambridge 1/11/05

Bob Hepple

From: "Garth" <benworth@iafrica.com>
To: "Bob Hepple" <bgh1000@cam.ac.uk>
Sent: 18 October 2005 11:24
Subject: Rivonia Interview

Dear Bob

Many thanks for the reply. My comments in blue.

I could probably do it in a studio in London on the afternoon of either 1 or 4 November when I'm down there. Otherwise you'd have to come to Cambridge another day that week. I'm not available the following week because my wife is going into hospital for an operation, and I am heavily committed after that. Could we at this stage make a provisional appointment for us to come to Cambridge for either the 2, 3 or 4th November. Which day and what time would suit you?

Before agreeing to the filmed interview I need clarification as to the terms of the interview. In particular.

1. The content should be confined to matters of which I have direct knowledge relevant to the property, the arrests and trial. I do not want to exaggerate my own role or to speculate on matters outside my direct knowledge. I do not want to go beyond my written memoir except to clarify.

Absolutely. I would like to confine the narrative to your own direct insights and experiences and use your written memoir as the foundation for this interview - much as we did during our last meeting.

2. You might, however, find it useful to film some background as to why and how a young white person like myself became involved, i.e. something about the atmosphere of the 1950s-1963.

Agreed, I was hoping that you would suggest this as this background would form a critical part of the narrative which I believe is extremely important to understand. We would like to gain an insight into this background of white involvement and the context of the 1950's, as it could be viewed as an important part of the buildup to Rivonia. I recall your mention of your grandfather serving with the Boer forces during the Anglo Boer War. If you are agreeable perhaps we can touch on the broader family history and how this fed into the 1950's-1960's.

3. Four hours sounds grossly excessive - I would like to limit it to not more than say 2 hours. Sure.

4. I would like an outline in advance of the subjects you propose to cover. I envisage the interview being similar in structure to our prior interviews, using your written narrative as the foundation. The outline would be:

An introduction into the pre 1963 context - possibly the family background and the point that you raised about the 1950's context including themes such as Sophiatown, the Freedom Charter era, your trips to Moscow, how the Party functioned during this era and your experiences leading up to the meeting at Victory Park and the switch to armed struggle.

5. My understanding is that the film will be stored at Lillieasleaf to be viewed there by scholars and visitors. That is correct.

I am not willing to give permission for it to be copied for wider commercial or other distribution and I would need written undertakings by the Trust to that effect. I have forwarded your email to the Trust CEO, Mr Nicholas Wolpe, who will arrange for this undertaking. From my side, you have my undertaking that I would not use this material for any purpose other than scholarly work.

6. Before it is made available to scholars and visitors, I should be sent a copy and given the opportunity to request changes in the interests of accuracy and fair presentation. Of course.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes
 Bob

18/10/2005

I hope the salient points have been covered.

Best wishes
Garth

> > ----- Original Message -----

> > From: "Garth" <benworth@iafrica.com>

> > To: "Prof. B.A. Hepple" <bgh1000@cam.ac.uk>

> > Sent: Tuesday, October 11, 2005 7:28 AM

> > Subject: Re: Rivonia

> >

> >

> > > Dear Bob.

> > >

> > > I hope you are well.

> > >

> > > Regarding my trip to the UK the dates that I shall be there are between

> > > the

> > > 23 October until approximately the 18 November. The intention is to

> > > undertake a filmed interview of about four hours duration (with a few

> > > breaks

> > > in-between). What dates would work for you?

> > >

> > > Best wishes

> > > Garth

> > >

> >

>

>

18/10/2005

BOB HIGGINS

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED
INTERVIEW WITH GRANT BENNYMORE
(Liliesleaf Trust) OCTOBER 2006. (Cambridge)

RIVONIA

INT 3 / Lot 4 / Tran 1

TAPE 9 & 10

Interview with Professor Sir Bob Hepple

Date of Birth:
11 August 1934

After an exchange of pleasantries, Bob Hepple provided a biographical overview of his life since Rivonia, which included an overview of his life in South Africa - for example in 1952 he went to Wits and was a practicing advocate when he was arrested in 1963.

This overview included an insight into his family background as a means of providing an insight into his politicization. For example his grandfather was a Dutch Jew who fought with the Boer forces. After the war taken by his mother to see a film about Auschwitz -he was shocked at what he saw, as his grandfather's family had all perished in the concentration camp system. He was shortly thereafter shown the shanty towns that were developing around Johannesburg and Hepple connected racial discrimination from the age of 12 to inequality. This in some way directed his life towards equality and democracy and the activities that he became involved with. An outline about his father was also provided – he took part in the 1922 Miners Strike and was active in politics with the Labour Party.

In 1952 Hepple started studies at Wits the same year as the Defiance Campaign. He attended a meeting on campus which was being addressed by M Jee and Motlana. The police burst in, disrupted the meeting and arrested the speakers. The students went on a spontaneous demonstration to Marshall Square police station to protest the arrest of these two speakers.

From then on Hepple became involved in student activities such as the Students Liberal Association, which was a kind of broad left organisation and which had been led by people such as Harold Wolpe in the past and they carried on those kind of activities.

In 1953 the South African Congress of Democrats was founded. A small organisation of whites who were totally committed to the ANC's struggle for liberation and Hepple became chairman of the Congress's youth branch.

BH: "We had lots of activities but it was an impossible task – we thought we could persuade whites it was in their interest to support black liberation."

However, being a member, gave Hepple a lot of contact with ANC leaders and he attended ANC congresses where he met people like Sisulu and others and Congress people like Ahmed Kathrada, Kathy.

BH: It was a complete eye opener for me; it set me on a certain path. Quite early on in that we would go to Orlando Township and hold concerts and it was this kind of screen for people who were holding meetings in the back room. On one occasion we were arrested and we spent the night in jail and we were charged with illegal squatting. They wanted to put us away for three months. But I was called as a witness by Harry Bloom who was our defense – he later became a famous author – and he called me and the next day the Nationalist newspaper, Die Vaderland, described me as a jong man met a rooi das. You see which I am wearing now. Just to indicate how subversive I really must be, because I wore a red tie.

So, our main activity at that time was around the Freedom Charter and what we would do we would drive activists out to the various towns on the Rand, like [barbe]ton and Springs and they would hold meetings and get people to write down what they wanted to be in the Freedom Charter. They wanted land; they wanted to be free of poverty, and so on. All these things were written down. There were thousands of pieces of paper collected. And we had the job of sorting these out and then people took them and out of all of this emerged the Freedom Charter. It was really a people's charter. It wasn't written by you know by some – I have seen it suggested that Rusty Bernstein sat in his room and wrote it. Well, he might have polished it and taken, you know, the models of the United Nations Charter and so on, but it really expressed the views of ordinary people that were collected from all over the country.

GB: Who were you working with on that Bob?

BH: There were members of the youth branch of the Congress of Democrats we took that as one of our tasks to try to help the movement and then the Freedom Charter was eventually adopted, as you know, in 1956

GB: Where you there when that happened?

BH: I wasn't at Kliptown because at that time I had already been told to keep out of the police sights and not to go to go to the Congress. And so I watched it from a distance. There was a hill nearby and I could see it in the distance. My parents were both there. My father went on behalf of the Labour Party and participated in the Congress So I heard about it, other friends were there, but many of those people were subsequently arrested and put on the Treason Trial; people who had been at the actual Congress.

GB: Do you remember much about Sophiatown at all?

BH: Ja, that was another activity in that period...apartheid...the Group Areas...was to move that wonderful mixed lively area Sophiatown, to destroy it, and to move the people on. And we used to go to the protest meetings addressed by people like Trevor Huddleston and so on. Of course the Special Branch were always there, taking our names down and so I was quite well known to the police as a result of that.

GB: As someone who was attending meetings?

BH: Attending, and also I became president of the Wits Student Representative Council. I was chairman of the youth branch of the Congress of Democrats, chairman of the Student Liberal Association, so I was quite prominent.

GB: Were you involved with NUSAS?

BH: I was elected to the Executive of NUSAS as well for about a year or two

GB: Was it in that capacity that you traveled to Russia?

BH: Yes. I was sent as a delegate to Congress of the International Union of Students because NUSAS there was division between the liberal and the left wing. The liberal wing wanted to join the International Coordinating Secretariat which was a Cold war body really, with American backing. And the left wing wanted to affiliate to the International Union of Students which was based in Prague and was supported by the Communist countries. And our compromise was that we would affiliate to both organizations, not full members but affiliate. And I was sent to negotiate the affiliation agreement with the IUS.

And I attended this meeting in Moscow but I got into a lot of hot water because while there I was asked to chair a session of the Congress. And a delegate, I think he was a young Vietnamese who had almost walked all the way from Vietnam. This was just after the Vietcong had defeated the French at Dien Ben Phu. And he came up and presented me, to accept on behalf of the Congress, a Picasso Peace [Staff] which was regarded as a symbol of the World Peace Movement, which was communist led.

And when I came back to South Africa, the liberal wing of NUSAS were furious with me cause they said I had leant myself to a Communist trick. And it was not long afterwards the NUSAS, I think, disaffiliated, so I wasn't very successful.

GB: Bob I remember you saying by the late 50's you drifted off, from the Communist Party. When did you first join the Communist Party?

BH: Well sometime in about 1954. I was in the Congress of Democrats, I was asked if I would join the Communist Party which was then a totally submerged body. It didn't publicize itself. It was kind of like a caucus within the Congress Movement.

I operated in a small group of three or four people who were all students and we had a single contact who would pass down messages and so on.

But, let me say, at that time, I think, Marxism had a lot of attractions because it seemed that it provided an analysis of the twin evils of South Africa – racial domination and economic exploitation. And so we were all in Marxist study groups and in the Communist Party but it was on a very limited scale.

For me, disillusion came in after the famous congress in 1956 when Stalin was exposed and then the Soviet invasion of Hungary. And there was also a feeling that some of the communist leaders in South Africa were what we called crocodiles. That is that they only snapped up when you did something; if you moved.

So I kind of drifted away from activities and I submerged myself into the South African Congress of Trade Unions, edited their newspaper, gave voluntary legal advice and so on and was working in that capacity until the turning point – that was 1960 – the State of Emergency.

GB: Were you working with Leon Levy?

BH: In SACTU, yes. I worked very closely with Leon Levy, Phyllis Altman and black trade union leaders like Leslie Masina, Don Mateman and a whole lot of others.

GB: You mentioned that small group in the Communist Party, three or four of you guys, what tasks did that group do and who was in that group with you?

BH: Well I don't think I can really say who was in the group but in fact our contact was Harold Wolpe, he was the contact with the next level

The activities were largely discussing what we were going to do within the organizations in which we were working, whether it was the Congress of Democrats, student matters and so on. It was a kind of a caucus if you like. We didn't have any outer activities, the Communist Party was illegal.

GB: Was it Harold Wolpe that recruited you into the Communist?

BH: Yes

GB: How did that recruitment come about?

BH: Well I think simply because I had been involved in all of these activities, they were aware of my leanings, and then I got this approach and I agreed.

GB: Could you describe the approach?

BH: If I remember correctly we were at a meeting in a house somewhere in Hospital Hill, in Johannesburg, and he called me outside and popped the question and I said I would think about it but I agreed after a while.

GB: Did you come into contact with people like Bram at that point?

BH: At that time I did on one or two occasions but the whole thing was run like any underground cell movement that you only knew what you had to know and that you didn't know other members. You might have suspected it but you never asked the question until you were actually on a mission of some kind and it was necessary to know them. So, Joe Slovo and Harold Wolpe were really the two people outside of my group who I knew.

GB: And knew them as active?

BH: Yes.

GB: And Ahmed Kathrada, did you come into contact with him at Wits or was ...?

BH: I came into contact with him through the Congress Movement because the Indian Congress. He was one of the people who used to drive out to the Rand to collect for meetings on the Freedom Charter and so on. I became quite involved with him at that time.

GB: We get to the 1960's - Sharpeville

BH: Ja. That was an important turning point because as I say, I was mainly involved in trade union activities, wasn't involved in anything else. And then 1960 Sharpeville, the State of Emergency.

The National Executive of SACTU had passed a resolution that they were expecting there was going to be clampdown. That if anything happened, I was given sole executive powers to reconstitute SACTU. And I took personal responsibility for the Laundry Workers and Metal Workers Unions and then tried to reconstitute a national executive because leaders like Leon Levy were arrested, others went into hiding, or fled the country so, and that's what I did.

But at that time I then got an approach from Bram Fischer who said the leadership was either in jail. By this he meant the leadership of the ANC and the Communist Party were in jail or had left the country and he was trying to reconstitute it and so he asked me to help. Now Bram was a very persuasive advocate and I had a great deal of admiration for him. He was courageous, inspiring person. So I agreed.

And during that State of Emergency, I think I helped him, to keep the thing going. I acted as a kind of life line with people underground and so on. At the end of the Emergency when people were released or had gone to Swaziland came back.

Then I kinda drifted back into the SACTU activities.

But I was still used quite extensively as a support for people underground. And the most important person who first went underground was Nelson Mandela. Now I hadn't known Mandela personally, really, only at a distance I had seen him in various contexts until then. And I realized what a courageous man he was but also what enormous self discipline he had, and a person, very charismatic, in his own quite way and a lovely sense of humour.

So one of my tasks was as part of a support group to pick him up, take him to meetings, arrange meeting places and generally to assist him. I was one those who helped him leave the country when he had to go abroad for a period, went abroad I think for about nine months and when he came back I saw him again. So I was playing that kind of role, as a support for these underground people, right until the time of the Rivonia raids

GB: Bob can you recall who was with you on that support committee?

BH: We didn't operate on everybody knows anything. A man - Wolfie Kodesh. He was a very important link; he really was the man who took prime responsibility for Mandela

So we worked with him. Unfortunately he is now deceased. But he was a very important cog in that wheel of keeping things going.

GB: Do you recall any incidents with Mandela?

BH: Well he used to...one had to be careful because you couldn't have a white man driving a black man in the back seat in those days. So he would don a chauffeur's hat and sit and drive me sitting in the back to wherever we had to go. Occasionally it was dark and he could just come and see without being noticed. That was the kind of way we had to operate in those days.

Then I took him to my own home, sometimes, we sometimes had meetings there. And he was always so friendly to whoever happened to be in the house at the time. Very open, warm character

GB: Was your house used as a safe house?

BH: Not as a safe house, it wasn't safe at all but we used it for meetings, sometimes. It wasn't safe because the police still had tags on me and I was raided several times in that period between 1960 and 1963. But sometimes we had nowhere else to go, so we would bring Mandela to my home in Victory Park.

GB: Now I remember you mentioned once before about a very important meeting that was held at a house where discussions were held around the move to armed struggle.

BH:

Part of this. At the end of the State of Emergency, I was asked to help to organize a meeting of leaders from various organisations to discuss what should happen. I think it was about December 1960 and what I did was I rented a house in Emmerentia, Johannesburg, and just for a period for a month or so. But it was all geared to holding a weekend conference.

I don't know how we did it but we managed to get probably thirty people, including Mandela, Sisulu, Kathrada and people from other parts of the country into a room in this house. We fed them. It was a house with high hedges and that, we hoped nobody could see us. We had a conference that went over at least one night, two days or so.

I sat in on the conference, and there was a discussion and it was decided that the time had come to move to armed struggle and that the ANC executive should be persuaded of this. And my understanding of what was agreed at that time was that this would be secondary

means of struggle but it was necessary to form defence groups in the townships, it was necessary to support armed struggle that was going on in places like Sekukunieland and so on and gradually to build up a force of trained guerillas.

That was the kind of decision that was taken then. And that was then implemented in 1961, I think by the end of 1961, Umkhonto had been founded.

That was the background of that particular time.

GB: So were the rural uprisings in Sekuhukunieland and Pondoland in the Eastern Cape influencing the shift...

BH: Yes. It clearly was. People were defending themselves and using whatever weapons they had to hand. People were being arrested and even executed for taking part in these rural struggles.

About that time I had been for a short time a lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand but I went to the Bar because I found it was easier for me to carry on these activities as an advocate in chambers.

I started being asked by Harold Wolpe and others to take political cases and another lawyer called Shalomid Muller sent me to Sekukunieland to defend people charged there and it was horrifying to see the torture to which people had been subjected, the way in which they were being treated and the magistrates were wholly on the side of the police. They weren't getting fair trials. They used to make it as difficult as possible for us to defend them.

But I then became exposed to what was going on in the countryside and there really was an armed rebellion going on in places like Sekhukunieland. I didn't have any personal experience of the Eastern Cape.

So Umkhonto, as I saw it, was growing out of this, the rural struggle. In the urban areas people had to defend themselves against the police and build up this and eventually build up a trained guerilla force as well because they were facing this huge police state

GB: So will it be fair to say that Umkhonto wasn't the beginning of something – but it was an organisation that was coming out of a longer period of resistance?

BH: I think it was. Because the ANC, as you had know, for decades had been trying entirely peaceful means and every time they had been crushed and then they were outlawed. So the only way to go. And Mandela and others, really, and Sisulu and others

had analyzed the situation and said the only way can now go is armed struggle. But my understanding was that it would be built up gradually.

GB: So Incremental growth...?

BH: That was my understanding. But let me make it clear, I was never a member of MK. I had no part in the discussions which then emerged to build it up. I was not in the kind of the military side of the activities at all.

GB: Bob, just a point of clarity you came back into the Communist Party when Bram Fischer approached you, which year was that?

BH: I think that was during the State of Emergency, during 1960.

GB: 1960. Did you join the Secretariat immediately?

BH: No that happened later. The course of events was this. That after Mandela was arrested soon after he got back into South Africa...the story was that Mandela was arrested on his way back from Natal and he was put on trial for organizing an illegal strike, that was against the declaration of a white Republic and secondly for leaving the country without proper documents.

At first Joe Slovo acted as his lawyer and then Joe was banned to Johannesburg and he couldn't go to the trial being held in the old synagogue in Pretoria. So Mandela asked me, in fact Harold Wolpe, Mandela through Harold Wolpe and Harold Wolpe said he must have you – someone he could trust to take messages backwards and forward to the underground leadership.

So I acted as his lawyer. He decided to put up a political defence and therefore my role was to sit next to him, not to speak for him. But I won't, for the moment talk about the incidents during the trial. But that's how I got involved there.

And at the end of the trial, Fischer and Slovo asked me to join the Secretariat because other leaders had gone underground, Sisulu Kathrada Govan Mbeki and others. They needed a lifeline and they said to me, you know, all of them were banned, or in some way restricted and the only one who was at freedom. I wasn't under any restrictions was me. My cover as an advocate seemed appropriate. So I agreed to do that.

From then on, from about November 1962 until July 1963, I was having regular meetings, acting as a kind of lifeline between the underground leadership and those outside.

GB: If we go to 1961, we understand that in 1961 the Communist Party bought Liliesleaf farm through a front company. One of the first residents there was Nelson Mandela who used Liliesleaf as his base of operations. He then went into Africa on a mission for six months, returned and got arrested...Did you have any contact with Mandela during that period and Liliesleaf?

BH: Yes. I knew nothing about the purchase of Liliesleaf but this was the period 1961 when I was acting as a bit of a lifeline or support group for Mandela. And on one occasion Joe Slovo asked me to come with him to take Mandela back from a meeting to Liliesleaf. I think I came there and I met Arthur Goldreich there at the same time. And then subsequently on a few occasions, I myself drove Mandela back but I didn't know anything much about what was going on there. I realized that Goldreich was the resident with his family but I didn't discuss the details.

So that was my introduction to Liliesleaf.

But I didn't get reintroduced to Liliesleaf until I joined the Secretariat in around November 1962 when quite regular meetings were there, people were living there and so on. So there must have been a gap of perhaps up to a year when I was away from that place.

GB: What do you recall of Liliesleaf, the first time that you went there?

BH: Well, I was amazed at this very big property with a lovely house. It was kind of well off white person would live in this. It was known as the area where the mink and manure set lived 'cause they had horses and so on and warming coats.

Goldreich wasn't in that category, it was a cover.

But it was that kind of area – Rivonia.

It quite amazed me when I saw it for the first time.

GB: Lots of gin and tonics and horse riding?

BH: that's what you would expect. That was the area. I had known some other people who had lived in that area and I associated them with the wealthier classes.

GB: and you drove Nelson Mandela to Liliesleaf from a meeting, what was the purpose of taking him there?

BH: Well, I mean I understood he was staying there. I didn't know for how long or for what but I knew that this is where he had to be.

GB: At that time were you guys taking countermeasures when you were driving?

BH: I can't remember distinctly. One was always conscious of the need to be careful, but ah to make sure you weren't being followed, and so on.

GB: Bob, if we go to Mandela's trial in 1962, how did you come to get involved in that?

BH: Well, as I have mentioned, Harold Wolpe said Mandela wanted me to replace Joe Slovo and I became involved then.

And my role was to sit next to him and help him with legal issues that arose, act as a conduit between him and the people outside. And I sat with him also and worked with him on the very great statement that he made at the end of the trial. He drafted it but he asked me to read it for him and comment on it.

Just mention one or two incidents during the trial which showed his character

On one occasion some observer noticed the magistrate, the senior magistrate going out for lunch in his car with two of the prosecuting policeman. And so I was told this and I said to Mandela, “

“You have good grounds now for asking for his recusal.”

Mandela had already asked him to recuse himself on the grounds that he was a white man judging a black man who had no vote who had no say in the country. That was a political point but now he had a real legal point.

So Mandela thought a while and said,

“Ok I will challenge him on this.”

But he said, “Do me a favour please. I don't want to hurt the magistrate's feelings. “Please just go and warn him I am going to do this.”

That was incredible.

So I went to the magistrate, who got red in the face, and blustered and made some excuse for it. Mandela made the application, which he declined.

The other incident was when I was in the cell with Mandela and there was a knock on the door and it was the prosecutor. I think Mandela knew him slightly from previous work when he was an attorney in Johannesburg.

And the prosecutor said to me, "I want to speak to Mandela alone."

I said, "That's ridiculous, you know you can't see him alone."

But Mandela said, "Ok, don't worry, go outside."

So I went outside.

And after about ten minutes the prosecutor came out with these tears streaming from his face.

So I went in, I said to Mandela, "What the hell's happening here?"

"You won't believe this but he asked for my forgiveness."

So I said, "I hope you told him where to go."

And he said, "No, no. I told him, "I know you are just doing your job, there's nothing personal"

Mandela tells this story from his side in his autobiography. But I can confirm it. It's actually what happened.

Amazing, magnanimity and never personalized anything and, you know, when you hear about his subsequent life in prison and that you see the same characteristic. Of course, around the world he was branded as a terrible terrorist. But he had this innate sense of understanding the motivations of other people.

GB: During that trial, didn't Mandela pass instructions on about certain documents?

BH: Yes, that was a very important matter. Its importance only emerged later. Mandela said to me, "Please tell them to remove all my documents that I have left at Rivonia."

And I duly passed this on. I can't remember to whom exactly but it would have been probably Slovo or Bram Fischer. And it emerged later, at some stage after November 1962, people would ask, "Is the place clean?"

We were told, oh well, there was some kind of secret cellar in which documents were kept. But the people at the meeting which I was attending were told that it's been cleaned out.

It was only when I was actually myself in detention and under interrogation that I learnt, to my great shock, that the police had found all these documents in the cellar which had not been destroyed. I mean, it completely shattered me, because it was contrary to Mandela's own instructions.

GB: There are two ways of looking at that. Had they obeyed those instructions, we wouldn't have those documents today.

BH: With the benefit of hindsight. But at the time it certainly made their conviction and possible death sentence inevitable. Because of the brilliance of Bram Fischer and George Bizos they escaped the death penalty but it was a very close run thing I think those documents were so incriminating that there was no way out, of at least life imprisonment. At the time it was a terrible breach of security.

GB: When he, when Mandela read his statement from the dock in that trial in 62, what was the reaction in court then?

BH: It was a stunned sort of silence. Everybody listened to him very quietly and in the gallery there was cheering from the Africans and other supporters in the gallery. I think Winnie Mandela came to. He dressed in tribal dress and so did Winnie and it was a very strong statement. It was very inspiring moment.

When he was lead away we thought it was for five years. And we thought that maybe at the end of it they will do with Mandela what they did with Robert Sobukwe and that is confine him, as they did non Robben Island, to a house outside the prison. But of course, within nine months they had discovered Rivonia and they had all these documents, so he got life imprisonment.

GB: Bob, now you mentioned about being involved in the Secretariat. What were your duties in the Secretariat?

BH: Well they were basically a lifeline. I was bringing messages backwards and foreword from, to the underground leadership, attending to their needs and so on. That was my primary function. I didn't have a kind of policy role or anything of that kind. But I sat in on some meetings when policy was being discussed.

GB: And which organizations did the Secretariat serve?

BH: It was always difficult to know which hat people were wearing because there were really three organizations. There was the Communist Party which as you say had bought the house. There was the ANC and these were all ANC leaders and there was MK. And it was a question you wouldn't ask, what are organisation are you here for?

The Secretariat as I understood it was servicing the ANC and the Communist Party – their leadership which was mixed. People, I don't think there was any kind of line drawn between these organizations.

GB: Who do you recall being on the Secretariat with you?

BH: Well, it changed because of the people coming and going, and so on,

But by the time of the arrests it was the people who were sitting in that room on the 11th July. That was Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Rusty Bernstein and myself. Previously, before he left the country, Joe Slovo had been on that committee as well.

GB: Was Ruth First and Bram Fischer were they on that committee?

BH: No they weren't actually on the Secretariat but I did see them at some other meetings; that were held at Rivonia.

NW: Harold Wolpe?

BH: I actually never attended a meeting with Harold Wolpe at Rivonia or anywhere else. I think we were working on parallel lines. So, he was at meetings that I wasn't at. Things were kept in quite tight parameters, so no, the answers no.

NW: Can I just ask one question - Just going back Bob to the question of documents and your subsequent shock and horror – who informed you that the documents had been cleared out, that the place was clean?

BH: My understanding was that the people who lived at the place were responsible for the security. I cannot remember exactly to whom that was addressed. But I think it would

have been Goldreich and any of the other outlaws who were living in the place at the time.

GB: I think we have established that Goldreich had the responsibility.

BH: Well it would only be hearsay if I told you that. But my understanding was that Goldreich had the responsibility for removing these things because he was the resident of the place and in charge of the security.

Some general discussion between BH, GB and NW ensues about outlaws.

GB: When you drove Mandela to Liliesleaf, on one or two occasions, was he actually disguised?

BH: Very thinly. I think that he adopted the name David and he sometimes dressed as a chauffeur when he was driving the car but I don't remember any other particular disguise. I only took him out night and that may have occasionally been light but it was nearly always at night.

GB: So you would have taken him to the farm at night?

BH: Yes.

GB: It must have been incredibly dark?

BH:

You drive along the roads of course, you could be seen, but he would cover himself up in various ways.

NW: What kind of car were you driving?

BH: I at the time was driving a Vauxhall car. That was the car that I was in the day I was arrested. And it led to some embarrassment because it turned out that the car was actually registered in my father's name. We'd exchanged cars and the police then pursued my

father after the arrests because the car was in his name and they tried to pin him down but they didn't succeed.

Some general conversation follows about a hubcap found at Liliesleaf. Bob Hepple confirmed that he did not recall the police pulling a hubcap off his vehicle during the raid.

BH: They searched the car after the arrests, they looked in the engine and they stripped the car. So it's possible it came off but I used the car after my release for a few weeks in fact when I made my escape from South Africa I was using that car for part of the journey, so I would have noticed if I had lost a hubcap.

GB: We're talking about the Secretariat. I understand from your writings that the Secretariat had some rather heated discussions around Operation Mayibuye, amongst other things.

BH: Turning to Operation Mayibuye. I heard about this in about June 1963. Bram Fischer told me that Joe Slovo had told the leadership living at Rivonia that was the leadership of the ANC and the Communist Party that the MK High Command had agreed to Operation Mayibuye. I never saw the document but I was told that basically that it was a plan for an armed invasion and guerilla warfare in South Africa. And he told me that there were a lot of divisions about it.

And then I was invited to a meeting not just of the Secretariat, but of a number of other people, on Saturday the 6th July, held at Rivonia, in the main house. And at that meeting were present Ruth First, Bram Fischer, as well as the Secretariat, so it was an expanded meeting. And there was a division of opinion.

Govan Mbeki was strongly in favor of the Operation Mayibuye.

Rusty Bernstein opposed it on the grounds that it would lead to huge repression, that we weren't ready for this stage. And he put forward an alternative plan that there had to be limited guerilla activity from the High Commission Territories, Bechuanaland and so on; raids into South Africa, escaping back there. He said that would lead to an international incident, would involve other powers and be an important catalyst.

Bram Fischer opposed it on pragmatic grounds. He said it would bring down a reign of terror. It would lead to mass arrests and we would destroy everything. He was strongly opposed to it. I think that Ahmed Kathrada was also opposed. I don't remember exactly what he said.

I have to say, I sympathized with the views of Bernstein, Fischer, Kathrada, although I don't think I would have said anything, or very much, on that occasion.

But because the matter was unresolved, it was decided that on the 11th of July the Secretariat would continue the discussion.

One thing that I am clear about was that the plan was never adopted at any of those meetings

The 11th July we had to fix a meeting and everybody knew that Liliesleaf had become very unsafe because there had been a legion of security lapses, which I can go into later. But there had been a lot of security lapses.

On one occasion when I was at a meeting, some strange person burst into a room, in the outhouse. It turned out later it was a cousin of Goldreich who was visiting him. For some reason he had come in. He must have seen everybody, the whole Secretariat, white and black.

Another occasion, in fact the day of the raids, when I was coming down the drive, I saw another car coming up and I wondered what this strange car was doing there. When I got into the outhouse I said, "Who is this other car?"

And Sisulu said, "Oh that was the dentist who is giving me a facelift."

I know others including myself were mad, furious that this guy had just been invited there. We didn't know who he was. I mean, obviously he was trusted; and for a long time there was this suspicion that the dentist may have led the police there. I don't know, I think that turned out not to be true. There were that kind of lapse going on.

There were all sorts of trails.

For example the farm manager, Thomas Mashifane used to bring messages to my chambers sometimes. I had advocates chambers in Johannesburg, and how do I know that he wasn't being followed, or whatever.

There were these links.

Then a lot of banned or named people who were not allowed to communicate with other banned or named people would use me as a conduit. So I had a stream of visitors to my chambers with messages or wanting help, or so on.

Thomas Mashifane would come. I would give him a message and he would take it, or I would take it personally. So, if the police had any of us under surveillance, it would have pretty easy for them to do it.

On the very day of the raid, a man came to my chambers in the morning, an Indian, who I didn't know and he said to me, "I have got a message for CEDRIC from NATALIE."

And I wondered what was going on because CEDRIC was the codename for the center and NATALIE was the code name for the Natal district. And I knew these names 'cause on letters would come to my chambers addressed me. I would open them – an envelope - CEDRIC from NATALIE, and I would take them over.

Who was this guy?
I had no knowledge of him.

GB: Can I jump in, can you describe him?

BH: I really can't remember him now. He was an Indian man. And do I took the message. I fobbed him off. I said I don't know what this is about but I'll look into it and see.

NW: *Inaudible question*

BH: He didn't give any other name. He may have, but I can't remember now whether he introduced himself by some name. But it was thing – CEDRIC to NATALIE.

So I realized he was bringing some message. But I didn't know if he was genuine, he could have been a police spy.

So the result, I was very worried and it was one of the things when I did go there that afternoon that I was worried about. So on my route there I was extremely nervous, I kept thinking maybe I am going to be followed.

END OF TAPE 9 & 10

TAPE 11

GB: ...and you can tell us about Bruno and then lets go to the day of the raid, right from the beginning, all the way through.

BH: On the morning of the 11th of July a man came to my chambers. He was an Indian. I had never met him before. I can't remember now exactly what he looked like. He was well dressed – that's the image I have in my mind.

And he said to me that he had a message from NATALIE for CEDRIC. Now I knew that I regularly received letters addressed to me at my chambers. Inside was an envelope sealed from NATALIE for CEDRIC. And I knew these were for the leadership and I would deliver them personally to Liliesleaf Farm.

How did this man know about CEDRIC and NATALIE?

And I was deeply suspicious. I feigned ignorance and said I have to go out now and sent him away and said come back to me tomorrow morning. My idea being to make enquiries if anyone knew what this was about. Of course I never had the time to that because we were arrested.

So, on the journey to Liliesleaf that afternoon, I was very cautious. I took a devious route. I kept stopping to make sure I wasn't being followed, which meant I didn't go past the police station which I normally did, so I didn't see any activity there.

I arrived there, and as I arrived then I saw this car coming out, the car I was told later was the dentist. So that doubly worried me. I was quite nervous at that stage. Something was going on.

Then we had the meeting.

But I never discovered to this day who that Indian man was.

NW: Going back to previous meeting. Can you confirm if there was a heated discussion about the meeting to take place at Liliesleaf. Did Bernstein's house arrest influence matters?

BH: I can't remember exactly what Rusty said but we were certainly all very apprehensive about meeting there.

For the six people involved said, "Well, for the last time, let's meet here." They were not actually staying at Liliesleaf at the time; they had to be brought in, so three of them were brought in by Denis Goldberg in the Combi van.

But none of were keen but there was no alternative. Bram Fischer was in charge of what was known as the Accommodation Committee who found safe houses and I think he said that I haven't got anything that would suit for Thursday the 11th.

We were looking for a date and time that was convenient and a place. So it was going to be the last time and it was the last time but for the wrong reasons.

GB: Would it be true to say that it was Bram Fischer who actually made the decision to have the meeting?

BH: No. I think it was a collective decision by everybody there. Time was short because Rusty was under house arrest, he had to get away and we couldn't sit around waiting for another place.

GB: If we go to the day of the raid you mentioned passing the dentist on his way up the driveway. You would have parked your car. What happened next?

BH: I parked my car and I went into the outhouse and everyone else was there. The other five people were there. It was about 3 pm. And we first had some small items of business. One of the things were discussing was what to do about people who had been arrested. There was a lot of apprehension because it turned out another security breach that several volunteers who were going abroad for military training had been passing through Liliesleaf. I later discovered that one of these was Mr X at the trial, Bruno Mtolo. And then people had been arrested, the new 90 day detention law had come into force in May 1963.

Question and answer is repeated due to outside noise

BH: And several people had been arrested some were being held in detention at the time. Others had been released after a very short time and there was some worry about - had they made statements, disclosed things and been let out in return. There was a lot of suspicion around.

We were discussing those kind of security issues and one or two other business items, passing messages and so on, and then after about ten minutes we turned to Operation Mayibuye.

Govan Mbeki had brought a copy with him and Rusty took it from him because Rusty had made some notes and wanted to refer to the document. I never actually saw the document but I think it was on Rusty's lap.

And then we heard there were geese there and the geese started making a lot of noise. They were there deliberately I think to give warning. And down the drive was coming a van *Tradesteam Presses* and I could see this through the window and said what is that van?

Rusty looked up, he said, "My God I saw that van outside the police station on my way here today."

At which stage we all jumped up and we helped three guys who were in disguise: Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and Ahmed Kathrada get out through the window. They were soon arrested because the place was surrounded and the police had dogs.

By this time there was a bang on the door and Thomas Mashifane had come with some parcel. I don't know if it was related, whether he was delivering dry cleaning or whatever but he came and I said, "Just go and find out what that van wants," and closed the door.

At that moment, people started jumping out with dogs out of the van. And I stood nearest to the door and somebody near me was Rusty Bernstein and Raymond Mhlaba was also in the room.

And the police burst in and the first person to come in was a detective called Kennedy whom I had been cross examining in a political case not long before this and he said "Ah, Advocate Hepple, aren't you?"

By then they arrested everybody else at that point.

GB: You were led outside and there was something about Heppy we have you all.

BH: Oh Yes. Then we were arrested. We were taken outside and Dirker, who was another policeman I had interrogated, cross examined was there and he had just arrested Walter Sisulu and he said, "Oh Heppy now we have you all."

We were then handcuffed, put in the vans, held there most of the afternoon and the policeman who were guarding us had great sport setting their dogs on us. They had German wolfhounds and while we were chained up, handcuffed together, they would incite the dogs to lunge at us and so on.

We were kept like that for some time. I remember Govan Mbeki being very painfully handcuffed to the ceiling of the van, a very awkward position. I was handcuffed first to Kathy and later to Rusty. At some stage I was taken out of the van to look at my car being searched and I was also led into the room which I had never seen before, which was near the outhouse where they showed me printing machinery, roneo machines and other things.

And I said quite truthfully, "I don't know anything this."

But they asked me what I was doing there and so on and I said, "I am not going to answer any questions now." And I didn't and this was I think Colonel Venter who was the head of the Special Branch had by then arrived at the place, the head of the Special Branch in Johannesburg, and he was taking me around to look at these things.

And then after spending the whole afternoon like this we were then all taken to the Johannesburg Fort.

GB: Didn't Govan Mbeki Pass some comment in the van about the document?

BH: Govan Mbeki said, "this high treason chaps," because he knew Operation Mayibuye was there.

Now I hadn't seen what happened to the document but when I was taken back into the outhouse by the police, there were some ashes in an ashtray and they said, "You burnt something here, and I said no, I haven't burnt anything, which was truthful. I hadn't.

But what happened to the document, I am not sure. Whether it was in the chimney or whether anyone tried to burn it, I don't know. But they clearly got the document and that I think led to Govan's comment.

GB: From there it was to detention?

BH: We were taken to the fort prison and detained until the trial

GB: Bob, I understand that you made three statements while you were in detention and that you were interrogated quite extensively. Could you tell us about that.

BH: The basic rule which I understood was one should never make statements to the police and I wasn't interrogated for some time. I started agitating that by saying one should be released if I am not going to be interrogated. Putting myself in a false position. Eventually the police came and said, "We have found all Mandela's documents. You are all going to hang." I then realized how serious it was because even though I had never agreed to Operation Mayibuye I knew enough about the law of common purpose to know that I was associated and would therefore be in the same boat as everyone else. It was very difficult to communicate with the others.

We were kept in solitary confinement without books or reading matter or anything in the prison. Occasionally we managed to have little conversations without the warders stopping us. I managed to have some discussion with Rusty Bernstein whom had known me since a child and I really trusted him as an elder, friend and comrade. We jointly came to the view that it was important for one of us to get some messages out to people like Bram Fischer and so on.

And the police were saying to me, "If you could just explain what you were doing there on that day we will let you out that's all we need to know there had been other people who had been under 90 day detention, they had given innocent explanations, they had been allowed to go." So I had this rather kind of abbreviated communication with Rusty and the thing was well if we can get them to let you out, let's do it.

So I broke the basic rule – you should not make a statement.

I agreed to make a statement and this first statement I made I simply said I had been representing Sisulu in a case in the regional court. I got a message that morning from an Indian man, I was testing out what this was about in case he was a policeman to go and see Sisulu and he told me where to go and I had come there for this meeting and we had all been arrested. That was what I said in the original statement.

They typed it out and then they just brushed it aside and said, "Now we are going to get the truth from you." They didn't accept it.

And I was then subjected to three days and nights of continuous interrogation which was along the lines of being made to stand, couldn't go to the toilet. Swanepoel who was one of the two interrogators would play Russian roulette. He had a revolver on the table and he'd say, "What's it going to be," and he would spin the barrel, "Are you going to try this or are you going to have the rope?" Then went on at me.

I would be taken to my cell for a while and then be disturbed by the warders, or the police, woken up. I didn't really sleep for those days and nights. Of course the effect of all of this and solitary confinement is that you start living out of reality. You lose touch with reality. You don't realize you are losing touch with reality

But I came to the conclusion that, well, I had to say more than I said, even to the extent of incriminating myself. So I then under interrogation gave them a fuller picture but I didn't incriminate anybody other than those who were actually there, who were arrested. Just saying I had been there several times, I had met people. The police had said in interrogation they had lots of informants that I had been there several times. I admitted that I had been recruited to the Communist Party and that I was acting as a lifeline. But I didn't know what was going on there I knew nothing about Operation Mayibuye. They asked me a lot a lot of names, had I seen them – no. The only person I named was Joe Slovo who was out of the country and all the guys who had been with me when I was arrested

At the end of that, one of the reasons I had agreed to do this was Swanepoel had said to me, "If you make a statement you will be released. We will take you first to Laanglaagte police station. Now I knew Laanglaagte from my experience as an advocate. I knew it was on the main road and I thought it might be relatively easy to escape from there because...my game plan if I had one was really either they will take me to Laanglaagte and I'll escape or maybe they will release me having seen this statement. So I was first taken to the Greys where this statement was recorded and I later signed it.

Then I was taken to Laanglaagte. And I was just working out my plan for escape. I was put in a cell which was right on the main road and I would have had to scale a very high nine foot wall. I was not incredibly agile but I was working out ways in which to do this. And then a few days later I was taken back to Pretoria and only later did I discover that the reason was that Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich had escaped. I was in Laanglaagte on Saturday the 10th of August and that was the night that Harold and Arthur escaped. And as soon as they escaped of course they clamped down and I was taken back to Pretoria where I was kept for the remainder of the detention. So that was how I made the second statement.

Sometime towards the end of September, towards the end of the detention period, the police came and said, "Well I am sorry we cant release you because it is in the hands of the prosecutor, Dr Yutar and Dr Yutar has decided he will not let you out unless you become a state witness, so I said, "well that is out of the question".

There was a very friendly policeman called Kotze / Coetzee and he said to me, "Ah he pleaded with Yutar to let me go and Yutar wouldn't and I must come and see Yutar". So they took me to the Greys where Yutar was working and after a long wait I was called into Yutar's office and he said, he immediately launched an attack. The police incidentally referred to Yutar as Daardie kwaai Jew boy, that angry Jew.

Yutar knew my mother was Jewish and he then launched into a huge tirade saying, "You are all going to hang. I am going to teach these Jews who are communists that they can't behave like this. They are destroying the Jews in South Africa." And he said, "You have the chance to save the Jews of South Africa by giving evidence". So I said no, I am not willing to consider that at the present. So he said, "There is no way I am going to let you out. You will hang with the rest of them."

But at that stage, after that or a subsequent occasion Coetzee sat down with me and typed up the earlier statement which was a kind of interrogation statement into a fuller statement. That statement I managed to get out through my then wife to Bram Fischer. I haven't seen it until recently, you managed to retrieve these documents I think from Yutar. I have seen it and it is basically similar to what I told them earlier about my going to the place on various occasions to assist the people there. So that was it. And then subsequently we got, I was put on trial.

GB: *Some general commentary about his impression of the statement*

BH: In my own mind I was satisfied that I hadn't given any evidence first of all against other people who were still active in the country and secondly that I hadn't incriminated the people I was arrested with further than they were, maybe confirmed things. I did feel very guilty about it because I felt I shouldn't have done it. But that's with the benefit of hindsight. I had given a statement under physical and psychological pressure in the vain hope of being released or having an opportunity to escape. It didn't work out that way. I got my opportunity later.

GB: Bob when you were in detention were threats ever made against your family?

BH: Yes, first of all they would detain my wife and it was a regular happening. They detained Anne Marie Wolpe after Harold Wolpe had escaped. They detained Hazel Goldreich. I was well aware of their tactics.

I had two young children aged one and two years old. You know, they also said because my father's car was there and so they were going to arrest them my mother and father, they were going to arrest my in-laws, my children would go into an orphanage. Now when you are under interrogation in solitary confinement these things really start playing on your mind. So that was part of the interrogation technique.

GB: What happened in the morning before the Indian guy came to your offices?

BH: On the morning of the 11th of July, Ruth First who lived near me came to see me asking me to take some messages to Liliesleaf. We had a conversation then about Operation Mayibuye. She was a little bit ambiguous about it, unsure. She said to me, "At last things are being done." We had a little joke about how we had been taken over by a military dictatorship they made the decisions already. That was the last time I saw her. Then I went to my chambers and that's when the Indian man came to see me and then I went in the afternoon out to Rivonia.

GB: Bob, who wrote Operation Mayibuye?

BH: That I can't tell you, I can't tell you for sure who wrote it. My understanding was that it had been the High Command of MK. But I couldn't tell you who the actual authors were.

GB: You guys were formally charged, what happened then?

BH: well the first thing that happened was there was an attack on the indictment led by Bram Fischer. At that stage I was representing myself. The indictment was defective because it gave so little information, didn't charge the people properly. And it was clear that Judge De Wet who was presiding was likely to quash the indictment. At that point tea broke in the morning. I was called up to Yutar's office and Yutar said, "I am going to release you now. I know the indictment is going to be quashed. I shall be calling you as a state witness.

Now I was then taken back downstairs. Straight after the adjournment the judge called on me to address him on this indictment and Yutar jumped up before I could say a word and said, "I am formally withdrawing all charges against Bob Hepple but he will be called as a state witness." And I was then released.

Now the background to this, I have already told you, that Yutar had told me I should become a state witness otherwise I wouldn't be released. I had tried to discuss this with some of the other accused. I had talked to Rusty Bernstein and I even managed with the help of Bram Fischer to have a short meeting with Nelson Mandela during one of the consultations which the accused held. On the day that were all brought out of solitary confinement and brought together. Bram, I told Bram Fischer and Joel Joffe that the police had said that I would be released if I agreed to become a state witness and I said, what should I do? I think it caused a certain amount of shock among the other accused. This was then obviously under consideration. My strategy was that under no circumstances would I ever give any evidence but I thought if it would induce them to release me then I would take the opportunity.

In a way because of the good fortune that the indictment was going to be quashed they were willing to release me. And I took that opportunity and escaped from the country with the help of Bram Fischer and others.

So that was how the decision was taken. In my brief discussion with Mandela, he pointed out to me, he said, "Well, if you do this, if you give evidence people will obviously blame you for that but its got to be a personal decision".

And I said to him but what if I can induce them to release me and escape without giving evidence. And he said, "That would be a good idea. That would be good".

GB: *A question about firearms / rifles on the property*

BH: I never saw a rifle there myself but one of the security lapses was this that there was a strict rule that there were to be no firearms there while people were staying there. I believe that Kathy discovered a rifle under a bed. And Govan Mbeki said, "I am not going to prison again, if the police come we'll have a shootout". I think he must have intended this likely. There certainly was a rifle under the bed.

GB: Was he ever censured?

BH: People were very angry with him. People like Kathy were angry. The point is that sometimes it was taken as a personal criticism and people didn't react very well to that.

GB: Security was slack?

BH: There was a legion; it just built up a legion of errors, lax security. The people who were supposed to be looking after security clearly weren't doing so

I knew Jimmy Kantor as an attorney in Johannesburg. In fact I once applied to him for a job and they turned me down when I was looking for an articled clerkship. I knew he was Harold's partner. Harold of course had been instructing me in a number of political cases. One day when we were in prison, it must have been sometime in August, Jimmy Kantor suddenly arrived as a prisoner. I was totally shocked. What is Jimmy Kantor doing here? But then Jimmy managed to give us a message that Harold had escaped. That was how I think I found out about the escape of Goldreich and Wolpe.

He was an extremely entertaining person who led his own kind of lifestyle, he was known as the Johannesburg playboy. When he and I were locked up together for a period at the fort we used to take exercise periods. This was after we had been indicted. He used to tell me stories about his life and his practice and so on. It was very amusing to be with him.

BH: He was a very honorable man but very much someone who liked fast cars and all the other things that went with it.

BH: Harold I had known for quite a long time but I didn't have any kind of close relationships with him in the organisation. He was working in parallel circles. I didn't even know what he was doing. I didn't know. I can't remember what I knew about his arrest. Certainly we heard that he and Goldreich had escaped

GB: Joe Slovo?

BH: Joe I knew very well he lived near us and also he and I were on the Secretariat together, we used to go to meetings together, go home together. In our chambers at the bar we were close together. In fact, on one occasion he dumped a whole lot of banned books on me and said, "Look after these." I kept them in my chambers and after my

arrest, when my chambers were searched they found the books. I had forgotten all about them. They were Joe's, he had put them there.

BH: He (Joe) was a very ebullient, friendly outgoing character, totally committed to the cause, a very good advocate. I worked with him on cases as well. He was a very charismatic figure.

GB: And Bram Fischer?

BH: Bram Fischer was quieter as an advocate – again an inspiring person, great courage in a way he was doing the most difficult thing of all. For someone who could have been Prime Minister or Chief Justice of the country. As an Afrikaner he sacrificed it all for the cause he believed in. And so he was someone who I greatly admired and this is why I think that I agreed to do everything the things that I did.

GB: Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki?

BH: I didn't know Govan very well. I think I only really got to know him a bit during this period at Liliesleaf. Walter Sisulu I had known for a long time through the ANC and he was a magnificent human being. Very understanding, very common sensical, not somebody with grand theories or anything but someone who saw everything from the perspective of ordinary people, clear thinker and a very warm human being. One of the great things he did during the trial he was interrogated by Yutar and Yutar said to him if Hepple gave away some premises in Mountain View would you regard him as a traitor. And he said I would want the whole thing to be investigated. I won't accept it. But after several days of cross examination he answered a hypothesis then he might be a traitor.

Walter was terribly worried by this. He was awaiting sentence, which could have been the death sentence and he wrote me a personal letter, which I have kept in which he says that was very far from his opinion of me, he did not regard me as a traitor and he thought very highly of my family, he knew my family well and of me. For a man in that situation to write a letter like that was great.

Some years later Kathy Kathrada in an interview in the Mail & Guardian said similar things. I think that is a sign of Walter's character.

GB: Your initial involvement – why the Communist Party?

BH: Well two reasons. The one was ideological, namely that I was studying economics at university and the one thing we weren't taught was Marxism. Through my friends I started reading and it seemed to us to provide an analysis, an explanation about the amiserisation of the proletariat and we saw the whole capitalistic system as being implicated in this and it seemed to us to provide an explanation for both racial domination and economic exploitation in South Africa. I later changed my views about this but at the time it was an important factor.

The second was a practical reason and that is that the only party that was open to all races in South Africa was the Communist Party. Even the Congress of Democrats was whites only. We were divided up. You could meet on the basis of complete equality with other people who were members. Of course we were in small cells, even my own cell had black and white members in it. We were able to, you felt you were talking to like minded people. So it was the attractive way of getting involved. Whether in another time another place I would have done the same, I don't know.

GB: Who was in your cell with you?

BH: I can't really remember the details. The contact was Harold Wolpe.

Some general discussion then ensues about the booklet which Hepple published about his experiences, his entry interview by the Home Office when he applied for political asylum in Britain during which it became apparent that the South African's had supplied the British with information about Hepple, such as his detention; and that he had been spied on by a BOSS agent in Cambridge University.

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