

Capture ~~The Trap~~ I. 1.

As soon as I ^{struck} lit my match to light my dynamite fuse, I knew something was wrong. There were four of us at the railway line in open country about 12 miles from Johannesburg, and we had chosen ~~the time~~ ^{midnight}, an hour after the last train ~~in the morning~~ -

~~carefully~~ ^{so} ~~to~~ ^{to} avoid threat to human life. ~~(I'll tell you more about my organization later).~~

The plan was that ~~as soon as~~ the flame from my match was to be the signal for my comrades, ~~companions~~, Jamiet and Shovich, to light their fuses - (Reggie was keeping watch some distance away. But I noticed that where Jamiet was, ~~that was~~ a little fire had been lit.

'What the hell are you doing?' I shouted across to him. Reggie ~~shouted~~ ^{yelled at me}: 'Light the bloody fuse!'

At the very moment I lit ~~my~~ ^{the} fuse, we heard a loud police whistle.

'Run', Reggie yelled to us 'it's the cops!' There was a three foot fence nearby. We jumped it and ran to the car about twenty yards away. As we got closer to the car we suddenly found the whole place lit up, and we were ~~suddenly~~ surrounded by about twenty or thirty

P.O. Box 3135 Kapiti
Tele Phone 741530

police men heavily armed with sten-guns and rifles. They ^{were wearing} railway worker clothes, and as they closed in on us, they ~~closed in on us, and the~~ first thing I heard was lieutenant Swanepoel shouting: 'Put up your hands, stand still!'

Reggie had a crowbar all the time, our only weapon, and as Swanepoel shouted we all threw up our hands. I heard a shot and felt my right arm being hit. ^{At that moment} I didn't realise what had happened, only when I looked down and saw blood, only then did I realise I had been shot.

This was the first time I had come across Swanepoel, a thick, heavy policeman with a red face and short crew-cut hair.

'What are you doing here?' he yelled in Afrikaans.

All three of us replied simultaneously:

'We came with Garniet Jardien. Already we realised we'd been led into a trap. Jardien had supplied the dynamite, trained us and suggested the target. The Regional Command had investigated him and chosen the day, otherwise all the initiative had come from him.'

'Who is Garniet Jardien?'

'Garniet has a sister round here and we've gone to see her.'

3.

A policeman was sent to look for him, and returned after five minutes, saying there was none.

Just then the explosions went off, one after the other. We'd ~~taped~~^{stuck} the dynamite with insulation tape to a signal post and a tool-shed, and the explosions were very loud. We were shocked by the noise, we'd never heard an explosion before.

The first comment by Swanepoel was: 'Oh, ... soldiers of Mandela.'

He took the butt of a rifle and hit me right across the chest. I fell down and he and another ^{policeman} ~~both~~ using ~~butts~~ the butt, started digging the rifle into me. There I was lying down, and these chaps were really messing me up.

Reggie protested: 'What are you doing, can't you see the man has been shot?'

Swanepoel: 'Oh, Reggie, you're a loudmouth, and that was the end of Reggie. They got him down, he's a big guy, nearly two-hundred pounds, and well-built, and for the next

fifteen minutes or so every policeman had a ^{4.} go at him, pushing their rifle butts into him. They assaulted him so badly that when they finished he couldn't even stand up.

We were lifted up, put into a car, and with five policemen guarding us, we drove to Protea police station in SOWETO. By the time we got to the ^{police} station, I found my whole right shoulder collapsing on me. I was full of pain, my whole body was aching, but the shoulder. I had no idea why, was really collapsing. I begged the police to call a doctor, but they refused, saying: Coelie, you're going to die (jy sal oek).

Swanepoel then made a phone call, and while he was doing it, I felt like bringing up. I look around and made a dash for the window, and vomited out the window. Just as I got there, two policemen ran and grabbed me, obviously suspecting I was attempting to escape. In fact, with all the police around it would have been impossible.

Swanepoel returned and said: Take the coelie to hospital.

I was literally dragged out of the charge office by two black policemen, and when we got to a panel van in the yard, they picked me up physically and threw me into the back of the van, and jumped in after me. With three armed whites in front we went off to Coronation Hospital, where the doctor ripped my shirt open at the back and found the bullet sticking out between the shoulder blades. Blood had streamed out of a hole in my arm, but the bullet had travelled up to my shoulder and across the shoulder blade.

All the doctor did was to take a pair of tweezers and pull the bullet out. He suggested I be hospitalised for two weeks, but the police refused. He insisted and then wrote out a document saying that they must take responsibility for me, which they signed. The doctor then gave me a dose of painkillers and gave more of the drugs to the police for me for later. I never saw them again.

They took me back to Proter police station, where I couldn't find my two comrades. But as I sat in the reception, I

heard ^{6.} screaming coming from the back rooms and could clearly make out the voices of Reggie and Shresh. What was happening to them I didn't know, but I could hear shouts like: Please leave me alone. I don't know, I don't know.

You can imagine me sitting and listening, and thinking, god, I'll be the next going in there. I don't know how long it was, but after some time Reggie and Shresh appeared. They were so disfigured that they were not recognisable. Their faces were swollen, their eyes were closed and they could hardly walk. Shresh's ~~face~~ ^{head} face was so ~~puffed up~~ ^{messed up} (he couldn't put on his specs).

The police then took me by car to my home, where ~~my family got a~~ they started banging on the door. I gave them my key so as not to frighten my family, but as we entered the whole family was there, my two brothers, two sisters and my mother. They searched my room inside out, cut pillows open, dug into the fireplace, broke some tiles there, opened up floorboards, looked everywhere. I was so full of pain I could hardly talk.

When I lay down, I could rest for two minutes ^{7.}
then I would have to get up, then I would lie
down, get up, lie down, to keep the pain
away. My family was agitated, demanding an
explanation, and when one of the policemen pulled
out a chair to sit down, my one sister kicked
it away and said this was her house, and he
needed her permission to sit. I felt this was
wrong, but was too weak to say anything.

Unfortunately when the police lifted up my
radio they found the programme of the
~~South African~~ Communist Party: South Africa's Road
to Freedom, and also an American counter-
insurgency book with the writings of Che
and Mao on guerilla warfare. They also took
a box ~~file of letters~~ ^{written by sports people} which of letters from all
over the world to Dennis Brutus who had
started his campaign to get South Africa kicked
out of international sport. My comrade Mac
Maharaj who ran a sports magazine had been
staying ~~at~~ ^{at} our place, and had left the letters
there. They also took a box file of letters
and telegrams of sympathy on my dad's death
in 1953. ~~They had come from all over the~~
~~world, since~~ ^{because} My dad had been well
known for his political activities, ever since he

8.

had grown up as a child with Gandhi, and
been to prison many times, like his ~~my~~ ^{my grandfather} ~~father~~ ^{the police}
~~and grandmother.~~
So we had the problem of whether to ask for
a receipt - if we did so, it would be admitting
possession of the banned literature, but if we
didn't we might lose the sympathy letters. We
decided not to ask for one, and as we left,
my whole family assured me they would do
everything possible and get the best lawyers
for me.

From my home I was taken to Marshall
Square police headquarters, where I was stripped
of my belt and everything except my clothes.
Then I was taken and put into a large bare
cell, bigger than the ones I had been in ^{previously}
~~before~~ for ^{such things as distributing} leaflets, entering locations without
permission, trespassing etc., ~~with~~ ^{at that} an iron
grille and a large wooden door. ~~It~~ ^I was totally
dark, with only a small high window, ~~and~~ the
pain was dreadful, I couldn't stand it, and
kept walking up and down, ~~and~~ ^{until} it became
so bad I actually started kicking the door
and screaming: ~~for~~ help. Help, help. ~~I~~
I found the door opening, and ~~it~~ ^{saw that a} white
prisoner had put his hand through the grille

and opened the door.

9.

'What's wrong, friend?' he asked.

'Man, I'm in pain, terrible pain, get some tablets please.'

'I can't help you there, man. But do you smoke and have you got blankets?'

He went away and returned with blankets and a lit cigarette. You can imagine what a relief it was, the first cigarette in hours. I tried to pick up the blankets but was too weak, in fact I couldn't even lift it, all I could do was sit on it for a few minutes, and when the pain started, get up and walk round the cell. I always regarded this as the largest night in my life.

In fact, even after the sun was up, you couldn't see it. At about ten o'clock in the morning they opened ~~up~~ ^{the cell} and took me down to the charge office where I met my two other companions. Then I heard a cop shout: Abdullai Jassat! Laloo Chiba! The three of us just looked at each other as we heard the names of our comrades. My reaction was: God, what's happened, have they

10.

rounded up everybody else as well? Did someone break down?

Then we saw Jassat and Oliba, looking quite fit. I don't know what they thought of us, we didn't talk at all, and all five of us were taken ~~to~~ in two cars to Johannesburg Railway Police Headquarters. ^{(It was a} new building without lifts working yet, and we had to walk up ~~to~~ six flights of stairs. We were pulled and pushed the whole way and eventually ended up in a small room, where there were about six policemen heavily armed.

The first person to be taken away was Comrade Jassat. I don't know how long he was away, it could be anything up to an hour, maybe more in fact. All we heard was Jassat screaming: 'I didn't do it. I know nothing about it. Ma, please help me, help me.' and loud cries. There we were just sitting and looking at each other. Up to now, from the arrest onwards, we hadn't said a word to each other. We all sat very gloomy,

full of pains. We said nothing.

About an hour later Jassat appeared. He ~~was~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~a~~ ~~big~~ ~~guy~~ ~~of~~ ~~medium~~ height, like ~~a~~ ~~thin~~ ~~guy~~, ~~not~~ ~~very~~ ~~slender~~ me, but thin, less broad than I am. I looked at him and didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He walked in like Frankenstein, with heavy feet dragging, arms hanging down at his side, tongue almost hanging out of his mouth, a sort of bluish colour, with marks all over his ^{slender} face. He just entered and collapsed into a chair.

The second person to go was comrade Laboo. The same procedure followed, and he came back the same way into the cell.

The third was Reggie. Identical thing. What worried me was that he was in no condition when he left our room, but we could still hear the screams as they tortured him. Reggie re-appeared in the very same way.

Up to this time I really didn't know what was happening in this room of theirs. I was the next to go. When I got to the room I found between twelve and fifteen

Special Branch men there, all in plainclothes, including Lieutenant Swanepoel, Major Brits, head of the Railway Squad, I think. Also there was Colonel van den Bergh, before his days as head of BOSS. We didn't know any of them at the time. Swanepoel, ~~the~~ ~~thick, heavy set with the red face and short crew cut hair,~~ ~~who killed~~ ^{who was to kill} ~~(20 many of our comrades.~~ Van den Bergh, Vorster's right hand man, who masterminded all the operations against our movement, a tall person, much quieter than Swanepoel. Before, ^{we had} we'd known all the S.B.'s (Security Branch) in Johannesburg, but this was a new group, this gang. Later we realised they were the ones who had been sent to France ^{for special training} ~~some years~~ earlier, we'd read the reports in the press, and there were the guys who had come back and formed the new Security Branch unknown to us.

When I got into the room they asked me for my name, address, age, work and such routine things. Then:

'Who instructed you to go on these acts of sabotage? Who is the leader of the group.'

I replied that I wanted to see my

lawyer.

Next I felt someone punching me, and before I realised what was happening, all the police had made a ring around the room, and were kicking and pushing me, saying: Now we're playing Rugby. The procedure was for one policeman to dive full length, hitting me on the side, then another would come up and kick me as though I was the ball. I never felt like crying, that was the time. I never realised I could cry that way. I begged them to stop, pleaded with them, and all they kept on saying: Will you talk, rolie? ~~Will you~~ You're going to talk.

I told them to ask Gamat Gardien, he was the one who took us down, he was the one responsible. They told me I was lying, but I stuck to it all the time. ^{They grabbed my beard and pulled it whenever they could: why do you communists all have beards?}

Major Brits stopped them. I don't even ~~know~~ remember what he looks like any more, if he's still alive or dead. Van den Bergh was very quiet, like a nonentity. People were coming and going, I don't even know if he stayed.

'Are you going to make a statement?'

Like a fool I said: Ask Gamat Jardien. Gamat Jardien knows everything about it.

The next thing I felt a wet cold canvas bag being put over my head. Exactly who put it there I don't know. And then they started squeezing a knot and choking me. While I was being choked, I gasped for air, and every time I tried to breathe the canvas bag hit me in the face.

'Boelie, we're going to kill you today.'
Laughter.

'We've got the bastards.'
Laughter and talking amongst themselves.

How long this went on I don't know. Tighten and release, tighten and release. Again they took it off and said:

'Boelie, you're going to talk.'

I was literally finished. I could hardly stand. I begged them to leave me alone and again repeated: 'Gamat Jardien is the person.'

They pushed me into a chair, and I

found my shoes being taken off. Two policemen held my hands behind my back the back of the chair, while two held my feet, and one ~~using a rubber baton~~ ^{with a rubber baton} started hitting me on the soles of my feet. Here again I don't know how long ^{it was,} and once more I kept pleading with them. They told me I was going to hang, our whole group would be hanged, and jeered at our lawyers. We know your Bram Fischer, they said, we know your Joe Slovo's.

Thereafter they ~~applied~~ attached wires to my hands and feet. I was in the same chair, and they took a piece of wire with four pieces leading out of it, one for each hand and foot. Each piece had four little leads, with small gadgets at the end, like pins, and they put these with elastoplast tape between my fingers and toes. My arms were stretched out at my side, and they held me down from behind. Then they ~~placed~~ ^{took} the main lead ~~to~~ ^{to} a dry-cell battery. It's a very crude looking instrument, just a battery and wires. ~~Once attached to the~~ ^{as they} attached the lead to the battery,

Battery I felt a dreadful shock come into my body. My whole body seemed to be into a shock. I learnt afterwards it was only for a few seconds, but at the time it seemed that the shocks were five or ten minutes long. They did this three times in fact, but all the time I kept on insisting that it was Yamat Jarden. 'It's Yamat Jarden. Ask Yamat Jarden. Yamat Jarden knows everything.'

This was the worst of the times I had. I kept on screaming to them, begging, pleading with them to stop, but the more I cried, the more they kept on applying the shocks. Swanepoel was the man completely in charge, the man in command, while Brits did not ~~take~~ participate in the torturing. He would stop them, come and question me, but he never gave instructions for the torture. Swanepoel seemed to be the one responsible for this. Major Brits again stopped them and said: Let the roelie go, well see him again.

I assume that I appeared in the room in the very same way as the other three comrades had appeared.

The last comrade to go was Sharish. The same procedure followed. But what is significant here is that all of us were quietly sitting, not saying a word to each other, and the thought that ran through my mind was: What are the other comrades saying? While torturing me the police had kept on saying: We know everything. Reggie has given us a full statement. Jassat and Laloo have given us full statements. You are the only bloody fool, yaill see, your comrades have sold you out. ~~I subsequently became that they had said the same to all five of us~~

We were taken back to Marshall Square long after dark, and I spent the night again in my big cell. The next morning I was taken down again, and met all our comrades. We were driven in cars again to Railway Police Headquarters. We sat in the same room, and Jassat was taken away again. There were no screams, nothing, and Jassat

reappeared after half an hour. While we waited, ^{18.} they took photographs of us, and later a doctor appeared and examined each of us. He brought a mattress and told us to lie down, and said: 'You'll survive, you won't die, and gave us A.P. rods for the pain.

I was the fourth person to be taken away, ~~from the room~~, and as I entered the interrogation room, Lieutenant Steenkamp, head of the Natal Security Branch introduced himself to me. He shook my hand, and offered me a seat, and asked if I smoked and gave me a cigarette, which was most welcome. He then introduced me to Sergeant Naiger who was sitting at another table close by, and said they were ^{both} from Durban, and weren't brutes like the fellows from the Transvaal and didn't believe in treating people like the Transvaal chaps did.

'Naidoo,' he said 'that's your name isn't it ... Naidoo ... Naiger ... Any relation?'

Sgt. Naiger was cleaning his revolver, and when Steenkamp said this, my response was

19.

to say that if he had been
~~if he was~~ a relative of mine, I would
long have committed suicide. ^{Naiyer in} ~~He~~
fact had a terrible reputation, ^{and} when he
heard this, he jumped up and started
threatening me, but Steenkamp told him
to sit down. Later Steenkamp asked me
why all ^{we} communists had beards, and I
didn't want to say that whenever our leaders
had been arrested I had sworn not to
shave until they were released, ^{and} ~~not~~ that
as soon as one was released, my mother
would plead with me to shave it off,
and that we were all admirers of Obi
anyhow. So I looked at Naiyer, who
had a Lenin-type goatee, and pointed:

"You mean like that."

Steenkamp burst out laughing. He then
started questioning me about explosions in
Natal, telling me that he knew my
comrades from Durban, Billy Nair, George
Naiker and the others, and that he
was sure they wouldn't get involved in
stupid things like us people from the
Transvaal. He asked where I had been

on certain days.

Suddenly his attitude changed. Listen, man, he said, we can get you off if you cooperate. You know the maximum penalty for sabotage is death and the prosecution will ask for the death sentence in this case. You were caught red-handed. I'm a personal friend of Balthazar (Voster, who was then Minister of Justice, and not very well known ^(at the time)), I play golf with him every Wednesday. We can send you anywhere in the country, give you money, buy you a car, buy you a house. You're a young man, only twenty six, ~~you~~ you've still got a long way to go, we can send you out the country, we have many friends overseas. What do you say?"

I just kept quiet, did not say a word, and he told me I did not have to reply straight away, and could ask for him any time and he would come along.

Then he let me return to the room where the others were. Up to this time we still had not talked to each other. It never even dawned on me that we had not eaten for the last two days, until the police went to a restaurant

21.

and brought us some take-aways. I must have had about two or three spoons of food, but I just could not eat.

That evening we were taken back to Marshall Square, and this time we were allowed to stand together while an ordinary prisoner cleaned out a cell for us. ~~When we got into the cell, with lots of new blankets,~~ we ~~smiled at each other~~. We were all put into the same cell, with lots of new blankets, and this was the first time that we actually smiled at each other after being locked up. This was the first ~~time~~ ^{occasion} that we even talked ~~to each other~~. We ~~enquired from~~ ^{we asked} each other how we were all feeling. But even then we were restricted in our talking. One of them said we were appearing in court the next day, and we agreed that the new treatment was in preparation for this. But the discussion never flowed. While there was sympathy for the others, we each still had doubts in our mind. We did not know who to trust and who not.

While we were preparing our beds we were all called downstairs, and we got the shock of our lives when we saw our comrade 'Babla' Suliman Saloojee there, with five paper carrier bags around him. There was joy on our faces, we could all have grabbed him and kissed him on the spot. There was only one policeman there, a young guy in uniform. 'Babla' met us and greeted us: 'Hallo comrades, how are you? He told us not to worry, that we were appearing in court the next day and that they'd got the best lawyers for us. We mustn't worry about our families, about anything, we had the support of everyone.'

This gave us tremendous hope. We were all members of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and the South African Indian Council, which had not been banned like the African National Congress, and we ~~were~~ ^{had been} worried about the reaction of our organisations to our arrest for MK activities. ~~Babla's words~~ He then asked ~~us if~~ the policeman if he could give us the parcels. The policeman took out all the cigarettes, saying we could not smoke. He also objected to us having books, saying we weren't allowed liquor, so

Babla told him to taste some, and while he was drinking Babla smuggled us smokes. Each bag had fruit, chocolate, toilet things, and the brand we smoked: Texan for Laloo and me, Viceroy for Sharish and Jassat, one plain, one filter.

We took them into our cells, and now ~~we~~ ~~had more~~ life there was more life in us. Even our conversation changed, and we became more friendly to each other.

I only discovered long after ~~that~~ - by which time Babla was dead, ^{murdered by the police who} ~~having been thrown to his~~ ~~death from~~ ^(threw from) a - floor security building window - how he had come to see us. When I was telling my family about his visit, my mother said: You mean, he really did see you people? Apparently he had told them he had seen us, badly beaten up but in good spirits, and they had not believed him. All the lawyers had been trying desperately to trace us. Apparently Babla had decided we would come to Marshall Square, and had ~~to~~ bought the goods and left them in the flat. He had then sat the whole day in a corner near Marshall Square, and at 5 p.m. had seen us being brought in. He had run to the flat, brought back the goods and found this young cop on duty. ~~Introducing~~ He was an

ordinary guy with a gruff voice, but he had introduced himself as advocate Babla Saloojee and demanded to see his clients. The policeman had denied we were there, but Babla had taken his number, threatened legal proceedings and eventually the policeman had given way. He had explained all this to the family, but none had believed him.

The next morning Reggie and I had home-made slings for our arms. Between 8 and 9 we were marched, with ~~to~~ armed police all around, from Marshall Square to Johannesburg Magistrate's Court, past all the Indian shops. Those who knew us shouted the ANC slogan: 'Amandla!' which meant 'power to the people'. Those who didn't ~~not~~ not, stared. Undoubtedly we were the centre of conversation. We could hear people talking: 'There they are, there they go.'

We were taken to Johannesburg Magistrate's Court, and locked up in cells below the court, where our lawyers Harold Wolpe and Ismail Bhoolia appeared, as well as Shorish's father.

Our lawyers were shocked to see us, man they were shocked. Wolpe said: ~~Tell us~~ just tell us what happened, never mind anything else. We had been the first of our movement to be

picked up during that period, the first of many. We gave a full account in the short time available of our torture, and asked the lawyers to press for bail. Wolpe told us we didn't stand a chance, but we insisted they at least try. Bhoolia and Sharishi's father said they stood fully with us, but didn't believe in what we'd done. Sharishi's father ~~had been~~ was a follower of Gandhi, and a strict believer in non-violence. We replied that we were fully aware of what we'd done and we believed in it.

After the interview we were taken from the basement to the first floor. The court was choc a bloc, even the aisles were packed. And we could ~~hear~~ ^{hear} the comrades calling out: Amandla ngawethu! Comrades, we are with you. There were colored people, Africans, Indians, whites - more than half the people I had never seen, but the solidarity was there all the time.

We had quite a bit of freedom in court, and all the time I was thinking how I could make a dash for it. But two things worried me, I was not in condition, and second, if I did dash, it had to be with my two comrades.

On the Bench was magistrate Bishoff. Wolpe immediately raised the question of our treatment, and the more he spoke, the more we could hear from the crowd ~~the~~ sighs of 'shame'. When he exposed our ~~crime~~ ^{crime}, the prosecution replied that we had in fact been injured by the explosion, and that Reggie had tried to escape, and been held down by three policemen.