DIARY OF A DETAINEE

'TANDI'

Friday, April 8th, 1960

As long as I live I will remember that pounding on the door at half-past two in the morning, the front door bell ringing like an alarm. I am not afraid—it is almost a relief after the terrors and tensions of the past two weeks. A sort of numbness takes over; I am no longer in control of my life, it is in other hands. I pack a small case with a change of underwear, pyjamas and toilet articles, and climb into the waiting police car, only feeling intense misery at leaving the children like this. Others will look after them. But the little ones won't understand.

We speed through night streets to police headquarters at Marshall Square, where, as we are brought in, women are put together in one cell, men in another. They take our watches, money, fingerprints. We spread blankets on the stone floor and sit or lie around, tired, and in some cases, shocked. Some of these women have been out of politics for fifteen years—but their names were on an old police list, so here they are. The more experienced are better equipped; one or two brought sheets and pillow-cases and rugs. One woman arrives smartly dressed, with high-heeled shoes and ear-rings, but no change of clothes. "Why didn't you bring anything?" we ask her. She replies: "I thought it was all a ghastly mistake!" So it was, for her, but that didn't save her from some weeks in gaol.

At last, at one o'clock in the afternoon, we are taken to waiting prison vans. We begin to sing. We say goodbye to the men who are taken to another van. We are driven through the streets at breakneck speed—singing, trying to see faces we know among the people who stop and stare with surprise at the sight of white women in the inevitable 'kwela' usually filled with silent Africans. Police cars clear the way in front with sirens going, and an armoured car follows behind.

We desperately want to be seen, because under the Emergency Regulations our names cannot be divulged in the press or elsewhere; it is even illegal for our relatives to say that we have been arrested; and we feel as though we are to become lost people, nameless, unknown, held away from the world.

We are taken to Johannesburg's old, formidable prison, the Fort, where there are four tiring and frustrating hours of standing about and waiting in the hot afternoon sun, while a frowning, thickset wardress spasmodically shouts at us to stop talking, stop laughing, stop smoking, stop sitting, stop whispering.

Finally we are taken to three large cells, two of them interleading. There are 20 of us, including two women arrested more than a week ago. We have had no lunch at all, and now supper arrives: an enamel jug full of water flavoured with curry powder, in which a few potatoes float; some brown bread; and lukewarm, milkless, coffeeless coffee. We are all exhausted and hungry, but the sight of this food, the tin bowls and plastic spoons with which we must eat, and the chipped, rusting enamel mugs, blocks our throats.

We are locked in. There is a bucket under every bed. We make up our beds with heavy, dark prison blankets—no sheets or pillow-cases; but at least we have beds, although the mattresses are indescribable; there were no beds for the men at the Fort.

The First Few Days

We had a ghastly night. The discomfort of rough blankets and hard, lumpy coir, the bilious feeling left by a few spoonfuls of potato and curry-water on empty stomachs, did not help us sleep. Breakfast arrives—huge dishes piled with greyish mealie-pap, milk with dirt floating on top, the inevitable hunks of brown prison bread (called 'katikop'), and the over-sweet, lukewarm, light brown water they call coffee. Angry and rebellious, we decide to make a fuss about everything: the impossible beds—we want pillows, pillow-cases and sheets; the disgusting chipped mugs; the food. We line up for the doctor, and are called in one by one. He is balding and middle-aged, with the look of a man who suffers either from a nagging wife or constant indigestion, or both. "Are you fit?" is his question to each of us in turn. And each of us replies: "Yes, we were fit when we came in, but we won't be if we have to put up with these conditions for long."

This doctor is the first of several officials who maintain that the prison diet is scientifically planned to provide all the food-values needed by a healthy adult. We decide to draw up a memorandum on the food, and the doctor says he will pass it on to the authorities concerned. This is the first of an endless succession of memos, petitions, complaints and requests that are put in

writing and passed on—out of our lives. At least they keep us occupied.

We are told that the Colonel (the gaol superintendent) is arriving, and that we may appoint a deputation to lay our complaints before him. Khaki-coloured, lined, and as unmemorable as a desk in a civil servant's office, the Colonel informs our deputation that we are all detainees, but we must conform to prison regulations. He then listens to our complaints:

We are denied access to our relatives; our children are left uncared-for; we have had no opportunity to attend to many urgent matters, to delegate powers of attorney, attend to payment of rents and hire purchase instalments; we have disappeared overnight leaving families, homes, jobs; in some cases (six—later seven) both husband and wife have been arrested; one of us—a lawyer—is supposed to be appearing in Court. . . .

The Colonel says we should have thought of all these things before; we had ample time and opportunity to do so; he implies that every one of us should confidently have anticipated arrest and made domestic and business arrangements accordingly. It is our own faults we are here, therefore we can expect nothing. Perhaps we may be allowed to see legal representatives in order to arrange our personal affairs—not to discuss our detention.

We then raise the question of recreation. Our pens, pencils and paper were taken from us; we are not to be allowed any newspapers, magazines or books. No books may be sent in by relatives or friends. Later, he says, we may be permitted to purchase books with our own money, bought on our behalf by a prison official. We may not have our watches. We cannot see visitors.

The Colonel says we are receiving the proper diet as laid down in the prison regulations for whites, Coloureds, Indians and Natives. A member of the deputation, a biologist, expresses surprise at this statement.

"Do you mean to say there are different diets laid down for different racial groups?"

The Colonel: "The diets are worked out according to the needs of each group. You are making a political question out of it."

Lunch, at 11.15 in the morning, is ice-cold, greasy soup and 'katikop'; and supper, at 3.45 p.m., hunks of dirty, cold pota-

toes and lumps of the most sordid, salty meat imaginable. We cannot eat it, and resort to bread. This food, however, is coveted by the African women prisoners, and the four African women detainees (kept in a separate yard), since their diet is mainly yellow and black mealies, almost completely uneatable, and mealie-pap. They rarely have meat, and are not given bread. It is surreptitiously retrieved from dustbins and hidden down bosoms.

Sunday, 10th April

After a dreadful dream of the children left alone, I wake to a freezing morning. Suddenly winter is here, we are all shivering. But relatives bring parcels of clothes to the Fort, and are permitted to leave them for us. We are issued with extra blankets. They have bought new mugs for us. This is the beginning of a process whereby the strict and secret conditions under which they intended to hold us begin to break down. The intention was that nobody should know who was detained; where we were being held; that we should have no communication whatsoever with the outside world, no news, no visitors. A Court ruling within a few days makes it possible for us to have visitors.

We are busy organizing committees for classes; for food supervision (we are permitted to make a weekly purchase to supplement prison food—on our own accounts, of course); for bathing, and so on.

Lights-out at 8 p.m. leaves plenty of time for lying in bed and thinking. Either you fall asleep early, in which case you wake at 3 or 4 in the morning and do your thinking then, or else you do it at night. We all have our own individual worries: mothers who have never before left their children; mothers with children who are ill and need special care; problems of finance, of houses . . . should we try to let them? If so, what do we do when we are released? Will we get our jobs back? I develop my own formula for dismissing thoughts of the children from my mind. Most of the time it works quite well.

Monday, 11th April

In splendid sunshine, considerably warmer, we spend a busy day moving things to have our rooms fumigated. The Cultural Committee draws up a list of classes: French, Afrikaans, Mathematics, Shorthand, Zulu; a programme of physical training

—exercises every evening in all cells; and a general lecture each day during the lunch-hour period when we are all locked in together in the double cells. (Subjects ranged through history, psychology, politics, and were always interesting). We also decide to enforce strict rules for tidiness; our extremely cramped conditions make this imperative. We have one small wardrobe for 21 of us, and some tiny cupboards.

Our longed-for supplies arrive—our own weekly order—and we have the most gorgeous supper that I can ever remember—cheese, half an apple and half a tomato each, and bread with jam. The revolting salty meat, the mealie-rice and pumpkin (cooked whole, in its skin, unwashed, with pips and all) are left virtually untouched.

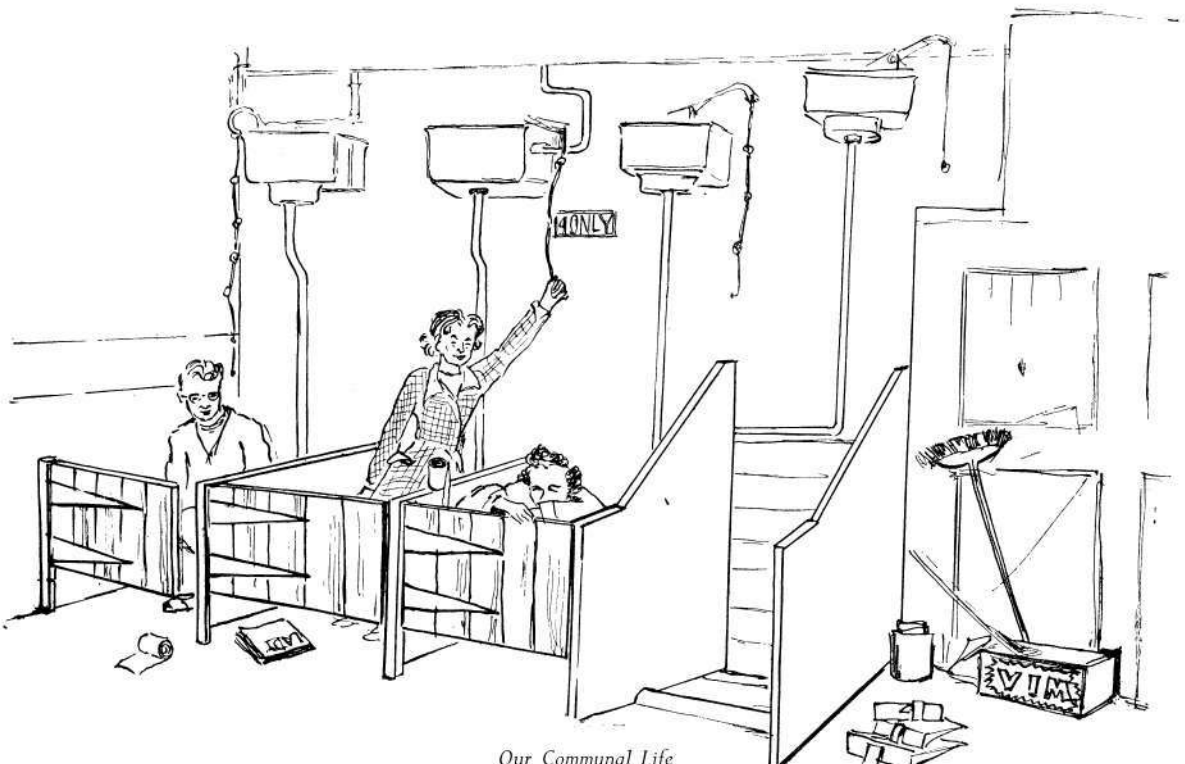
We finish off a busy day with a hilarious gym session, which we have to do in relays because of lack of space.

Our 'after-lights-out' discussion is deteriorating; we have started telling jokes to keep awake.

Wednesday, 13th April

This is our first visitors' day. We are keyed up with expectation. Visitors must first get permits from Security Police Headquarters.

We have another session with the doctor—a different one—about the food. He does not attempt to defend prison fare, and says we will be issued with vitamin pills. We say we want fresh vegetables and fruit, not pills. He agrees to make representations on our behalf that carrots, cabbage and other suitable vegetables should be brought to us raw, so we can eat them as salads, instead of in their filthy and horrible cooked form (the carrots unwashed, the cabbage smelling so foul that someone thought it was the lavatory that was blocked again). We ask if the food can be served reasonably warm. We are told there are no facilities for cooking food or keeping it warm at the women's gaol; the food is cooked at the men's section, where it stands until brought over to us. Here it stands again, so that it always reaches us quite cold. He tells us the congealed and repulsive fat on the meat is the fat we need for a balanced diet. At his suggestion we draft yet another memo, suggesting smaller servings, raw vegetables, oranges, peanut butter and dried fruit. (Later, in Pretoria, we were issued with special detainees' rations and found all our suggestions incorporated).



Our Communal Life

Tonight we have a new rule—a quiet hour every evening before lights-out, to enable us to read. This is becoming essential; so many of us together means there is always someone talking, and we have no opportunity for study or reading. We enforce this nightly, to stop our own chatter.

After lights-out, we can talk to keep awake. Each relates the manner of her arrest. One woman had packed and was halfway down the stairs of her flat when she put her hands to her ears and said, "O God, I've forgotten my ear-rings!" The policeman looked at her pityingly. "I *don't* think you'll be needing them, Madam", he said.

Thursday, 14th April

Shorthand class has started, handicapped by lack of paper, pencils and a textbook. The advanced French class was busy in conversation this afternoon on a strip of grass in the sun. Someone has sent us jigsaw puzzles, and M. started on a huge one—suitable therapy, you can bury yourself in it away from the constant nattering all around. Two of our heavyweights were beating their bottoms against a 15 ft. wall this afternoon—reducing, so they said. We nominated them our Escape Committee, but R. said they didn't even dent the wall.

Easter Friday, 15th April—and Easter Week-end

On this chill, biting Easter Friday, in response to our request for raw vegetables, we are brought a bucket of raw cauliflower and one of raw potatoes. No facilities for cooking, so of course they must be returned.

Because it is a public holiday, we are locked in for lunch at 10.15; we are out for only short periods, and supper is at 3.15! We are taking vitamin pills, and some are eating charcoal biscuits to counteract the effect of the 'katikop'; just about the only thing they don't supply is eatable food.

S. has an abscess on her tooth—her whole lip is swollen. The doctor says she must wait until Wednesday before anything can be done.

We are becoming accustomed to our communal life; two sit on the lavatories behind the half-doors, one lies in the bath, one is washing clothes, and all chatting happily together. All doors lock in prison, except the ones you want to lock.

Sweeping the Yard

African women prisoners sweep the yard with hard broom-heads, bent double because they are not permitted handles on the brooms; they spend hours carefully polishing drain-covers. Newly-arrived prisoners stand lined up in the yard with their shoes off. After that, they go shoeless on the cold cement and stones for the rest of their imprisonment. Why?

New Arrivals

Our lunch-hour lectures are going well; something different every day. For supper tonight they brought a bin of raw carrots and one of raw beetroots, tangible evidence of response to our constant demands for fresh fruit and vegetables.

On Sunday the African women prisoners start singing in church. It is not singing, it is moaning. Never have I heard African women sing like this. It goes on all day, a spiritless dirge.

Monday passed quickly enough, but to-day is one of those long, long days that move so slowly. Locked in from 3.15, one group plays scrabble, two women play chess, others squat on beds studying or reading; but there are not enough books; we need them so badly. What an endless day! Evening comes; B. is ill. We sit around working out word puzzles; do our exercises as best we can in this confined space. Eight o'clock and we're in bed to keep warm in the dark. Oh lord, to be listening to music again in a quiet room with the children sleeping . . .

Our lawyer studying her brief

Wednesday, 19th April

Everyone dreams! W. dreams we are all out and on our way to Swaziland. I dream of the children—B. comes to see me and says everything is fine, but he is crying all the time.

We all tend to talk about food at night. Last night we were all hungry. There is no shortage of bread, but we can't eat bread all the time.

We have tried, without success, to obtain mattresses for our African co-detainees. They sleep on mats on the cement floor—"the traditional African way," we are told by doctors and officials. One of them suffers badly from asthma. What callousness, in this chill weather.

Just as we are lining up for our nightly count, we are given a copy of the Regulations. Later, after having read them, we all feel somewhat subdued. We are not allowed to sing, whistle, talk to other detainees, do this or that. We are so awed, we do not even sing softly as usual after lights-out. But we manage to find something to laugh about, all the same!

Wednesday, 20th April

Matron reads the Colonel's reply to our requests:

Request that 'double detainees' (those with husbands detained as well) be permitted two letters a week, one to husbands and one to children . . . NO; request for watches or a cheap clock (we have asked again and again) . . . NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY; request to have textbooks brought in . . . NO; request to buy cosmetics and books from firms of our own choosing, where we have accounts . . . NO. And so on.

Friday, 22nd April

Edith is leaving to-day. This pathetic, good-natured little woman who was serving six weeks for stealing a dress, does not want to leave prison. She has no job, no friends or relatives, nowhere to go. She has been happy here. How sad—that anyone could find this place a refuge. We find a skirt and blouse to give to her, and picture her when the Fort door closes and locks behind her, standing in the street and not knowing which way to go.

Saturday, 23rd April

Last night we were hilarious, picturing ourselves leaving this place, our clothes in bundles on our heads, making straight for a drink at the Skyline Hotel. We woke to cold and pouring rain, and we crowd together on our beds, unable to move outside. But later we are told of new concessions: we may write and receive *two* letters a week, we are to have *two* visiting days a week, and textbooks will be allowed in for study purposes.

At the same time, we are busy preparing another memo, this time to the Director of Prisons, about (1) Our right to discuss our detention with legal representatives and visitors (there is nothing in the Regulations to say we may not); (2) our watches or a clock; (3) books—textbooks alone are not enough; (4) the food, which we say is disgusting in appearance, poor in quality, nauseating in smell, and nutritionally irrelevant; (5) medical and dental attention—two of us have been waiting ten days to see a dentist, one six days; (6) visitors—we want better facilities for seeing them. We make these requests on behalf of the African detainees as well.

Supper is so ghastly tonight that we send specimens to Matron's office. She has promised to complain, and we are saving a dish to offer the Colonel, should he deign to visit us.

Unremitting rain, and our giant, 1,000-piece jig-saw nears completion. It's like eating peanuts; an absorbed group on the bed works at it incessantly.

Sunday, 24th April

Rain, cold and Sunday in gaol—what a combination! We crowd first in one cell and then in the other while small, dark, silent and almost invisible women crawl under the beds sweeping dust and dirt. The Sunday dirge begins next door. The giant jig-saw is finished.

The Colonel honours us with a visit. We show him the foul meat and cabbage from last night—we had to keep it outside our cell, and even there the smell caused constant comments. "Well, that does sometimes happen," he remarks, after the smallest possible whiff of it.

The wind blows through our cells. We even did without exercises this evening, sharing hot water bottles and socks.

Tuesday, 26th April

Still raining. To-day we had a visitor from the Union Health Department. We voice our complaints, mainly about the food, but as soon as we mention the conditions of the African women detainees, we are told we are raising political questions! But they say the bathroom will be boarded in for us—even a door provided. It won't seem normal to bath in privacy, without people strolling around.

Wednesday, Thursday, 27th and 28th April

Still cold, we are freezing all the time. C. had a visitor to-day who during the conversation mentioned that the papers say we are going to have an Indian summer. The wardress on visiting duty intervenes: "You know you are only allowed to discuss personal and family matters." Perhaps she thinks this is a political issue as well?

Visitors wait hours and hours to get in. A letter from the children—"I miss you and wish you were home."

As a result of the Health Department visit, we are being given an extra room for eating. With benches round the table—though not enough for all of us—we can eat in comparative decency. Some books have arrived, and restrictions have eased. And the weather is beginning to clear—life is not too bad.

Saturday, 30th April

These are exciting times; our spirits are immeasurably lifted by snippets from the outside world, for in spite of the ban on news and newspapers, reports leak in. Wonderful to know we are not forgotten, that people are agitating on our behalf. And we are getting new concessions; we asked for our lights to stay on until ten o'clock, and this will now be permitted—civilization!

We are drawing up another memo of complaints; but we have discussed conditions endlessly, and now we feel we do not care much about having matters slightly eased; what is important is that we are here at all. We therefore discuss a petition to the Minister, and perhaps a hunger-strike if we are not released or charged.

Sunday, 1st May

We had a May Day talk, and we sing songs softly during our lunch-hour lock-in. We have another visit from the doctors, who talk about letting us have plastic forks and knives, and building a lavatory for the third cell. After the visit we go back to our cells to discuss our future. Many opposing views are expressed, but in the end we agree on the draft of a petition to the Minister.

Tuesday, 3rd May

A lovely day. We have all signed the document, and we have handed it in.

We, the 21 European women detainees, presently held at the Fort, Johannesburg, wish to make the following submissions:

It is more than a month since the first arrests took place under the Emergency Regulations. Two of us have been in custody for the full period. The other detainees, except for one, have been in custody for almost as long.

At no stage has any one of us been advised of the reason for our arrest, how long we would be detained, what charges (if any) would be preferred against us, or what steps could be taken to obtain our release.

We have been denied the right to discuss our detention with legal advisers. We are not allowed to obtain newspapers and have thus been unable to follow events or to read statements about our detention which may have appeared in the Press. We have on many occasions requested information about our position, but have been constantly ignored.

After careful consideration we are convinced that the authorities responsible for our detention have acted male fide *or without due regard to the facts. We are, furthermore, convinced that our arrests have been completely haphazard and bear no relationship to any emergency whatsoever.*

Although we cannot speak for anyone but ourselves, we conclude that the pattern emerging from our detention applies in all other cases as well, and that the purpose of the arrests was to intimidate people throughout the country.

We all know that we have committed no crimes, and we are fully prepared to meet any charges which may be preferred against us in any open court of law. Pending the drawing up of such charges—if they are to be drawn up—we insist on our immediate release. The continued delay in even considering our cases substantiates our belief that the authorities had no grounds for our detention.

Seven of us, whose husbands are also detained, have left outside 19 parentless children. The other women detainees between them have 15 children, and we do not know how many other children of all races have been similarly deprived of one or both of their parents.

We can no longer tolerate their deprivation, particularly in view of the groundlessness of our detention. In addition, most of us, as individuals or family units, face complete financial ruin.

In view of all these factors, we have decided that, unless we receive a satisfactory reply to our demand for immediate release on or before the 12th May, it is our intention to exert the only pressure within our means—namely, to engage in a hunger-strike from that date.

We have appointed a sub-committee to go into details of this plan.

We have also started rehearsing for a play-reading—Moliere's 'The Miser'.

Wednesday, 4th May

The noises of the night are behind me—the penny-whistle record across the street, with its maddeningly repeated theme; then the traffic, muffled, but busy; and at last the faint but clear sounds of trains shunting and whistling.

A lazy, beautiful winter morning, but there is great activity among the girls, with R. busy setting hair, faces being made up, a parade of smarter clothes—some of us discard slacks for the first time in a week. All this for the benefit of visitors who can barely see our faces behind bars and wire mesh, and don't notice what we are wearing. But it's good for morale.

At lunch time we are called to line up for the new Superintendent. He is extraordinarily nervous (are we so terrifying?), his hands quivering, his baton slapping against his trousers. He deals with requests we made some time ago. Everything, including the repeated request for watches or a clock, is no, not possible, or against Prison Regulations. Then the request to see our children: do we think it advisable from their point of view? Wouldn't it be harmful to them? We say that the experts hold otherwise. Surely, he says, if it is explained to them why their mothers have left them, they will understand? We explode with anger. Explain to a three-year-old why both parents disappear in the middle of the night and don't come back again!

We agree on details of the hunger-strike. We will try to get advice on the effect of drugs such as aspirin and sleeping pills when not eating; we discuss what we will do individually if we are separated.

Thursday, 5th May

The Superintendent tells us our joint application to see our children is not sufficient. Now we must each make an individual application, giving reasons. Each has her own reasons . . . "I have a son suffering from an incurable disease . . ." "I have four children under ten and my husband is also detained . . ." "My only child was very upset three years ago when I was

arrested for treason . . .'' ''I have a child who has nightly attacks of asthma . . .''

Later we are informed that husbands must also put in applications, saying they have no objection to our seeing our children.

Friday, 6th May

Our forbidden Indian summer has arrived. Warm, beautiful—and visitors! One visitor informs us that we are going to be moved to Pretoria (40 miles from Johannesburg). We say it's nonsense! The Public Works and Union Health Departments are here this very minute discussing alterations to our cells.

But at 4.30 Matron calls us and says we must pack; we are being moved to Pretoria in half an hour.

We retreat to our cells to discuss this, and we all decide we will not go. We do not want to move far away from our families, where visiting will be difficult for them; we do not know why we are to be moved, nor what is going to happen to us, whether we will be together or separated; we do not know what kind of conditions we will be taken to; we think the move may be the result of our petition to the Minister and the threatened hunger-strike; and we don't like being confronted with this instruction at the last minute, without any explanation whatsoever.

A wardress comes with a big book and asks us to sign ourselves out. We refuse. She closes the book and goes to report.

After a while we are called to line up for the Superintendent. He wants to know the reasons for our behaviour. We give him the reasons; he argues with us. The move, he says, is for our own good. We are being undisciplined and unreasonable; and the men are going too. The removal order came from higher up. We ask that he obtain someone from 'higher up' to come and talk to us.

He goes away, and later we are again called out into the yard. This time our Superintendent has returned with the Pretoria Colonel. We have the same argument. The arrangements were made by a higher authority. We ask to see the higher authority. We tell him to get in touch with Spengler (the head of the South African 'Special Branch'—Security Police) or get the Minister of Justice himself; whoever has ordered our removal. He says if we don't go willingly, they will be obliged to use force. We return to our rooms.

We sit on the beds, tense and nervous. We don't know what to expect. We decide we will not pack, not a single item.

After a long wait, we are ordered out again. The 'higher authority' has been 'phoned, and instructions are to proceed with our removal. We argue again. The Colonel says the men went without protest and have been waiting in the vans for more than an hour. Why should we object to going? We are adamant; we ask that the 'higher authority' come in person and explain the reasons for our removal.

Again we huddle on our beds, making Ricory with lukewarm tap water. The Special Branch arrive in the office. The Superintendent comes to argue with us once again. We tell him we were arrested over a month ago; none of us has been charged; we have been denied access to lawyers or to the Courts; refused permission to see newspapers; we do not know what is happening outside; we do not even know if there is still an Emergency! Why are we being moved 40 miles away? Why?

Eventually wardresses arrive and drag and carry us out, one by one, through the yard, through another yard at the back where the African detainees are kept, out to a waiting van. It is night as we are hauled along, the stars swaying above us. It is a rough journey. Many of us are heavy, and the wardresses are sweating, gasping and struggling. Matron pleads with each one of us before they take us. She says to K. (who is 64): "Out of deference to your age, please come along with us." K. says: "There was no deference to my age when they knocked on my door at 2 a.m. and took me away." "I'm putting it to you. It is upsetting for us as well as you. We don't want to do this to you." K. replies: "We all decided to do this together, and I will go as the others went."

It is quite impossible to describe our feelings as we are taken out. The swerving night sky, the darkness, the quiet yard, the legs of prison officials viewed from the ground, all seen with a sense of their unreality. Is this me? Am I here? What is happening to me, what will they do to us? And with that, too, a sense of elation, that we stood together, that we did not give in.

As we wait in the van, we hear the men singing. We sing, too, and they begin shouting and banging on their vans. We tell them why they have been kept waiting. Someone gives an order, the engines are started up, and the men are driven away quickly, out of earshot.

And at last we are all in, cramped, dishevelled. The van starts up and is driven at a furious speed through the Johannesburg evening traffic. Cars are streaming into town for the Friday night theatres and cinemas; we are in the dark, windy clatter of this

police van. The street lights make a pattern on the van walls, growing and fading. Then away from the brilliant streets, on to the Pretoria road, the cool night wind blowing through the mesh, the stars, the darkness, the rush of the van, and following us a formidable array of police cars.

Saturday, 7th May, to Thursday, 12th May

Our new quarters in Pretoria are two, enormous barn-like rooms, cold and gloomy, with high barred and meshed windows. We are truly locked away from the world here. We have all had an uncomfortable night, for we had no toilet articles, no pyjamas, and this morning no change of clothes. Our slacks are soiled from last night. We wash in cold water, with one towel between the lot of us, provided by Helen and Hannah, who awaited our arrival. But here we are provided with tables and chairs, crockery, cutlery, a stove and an electric urn. Such luxury! Even cloths on the tables, and vases of flowers!

In spite of the increased room and the facilities, we hate this place (and we went on hating it to the very end). We have no access to outside, as we had at the Fort. We are locked in for most of the day. We are taken downstairs to the exercise yard at nine every morning, brought up at eleven, locked in until two in the afternoon, taken out for another hour, then locked in for the rest of the afternoon and night. The bathrooms are in the yard, and we go down laden with toilet articles, dirty clothes, clean clothes, packets of detergents, books, knitting—we look like displaced persons. The yard is ugly, with prison walls around, and an area of grass with a palm and a wattle tree. The authorities build benches for us to sit on, and we walk around the gravel path every day for exercise.

Here we are called "*die Noodregulasies*" (the Emergency Regulations). Every day as we come down to the yard, they say, "*Maak oop die hek—hier kom die Noodregulasies.*" (Open the gate—here come the Emergency Regulations). Wardresses watch us the whole time, stand and listen to our conversation.

The morning after our arrival, all our things are brought to us from the Fort—someone had a big packing job to do. Nothing was missing. And every evening at five we strip to our underclothes, put blankets on the vast floor, and all do exercises together.

We continue with classes and lectures, and have some poetry readings. We prepare for the hunger-strike, discuss what to do

if action is taken against us—sentences, deprivations or solitary confinement. We decide to carry on as long as we are able. We are satisfied we have done everything possible now, and we are impatient to start.

On Thursday we do vigorous exercises before our final supper, and also practise relaxing. Afterwards, the scene is like the night before Christmas. We all bring out our private stocks of chocolate, cheese or biscuits, and pack these, together with the remainder of our own stores, into cardboard cartons. We all finish up a gay and busy evening by eating too much in an attempt to get rid of perishables.

The First Day—Friday, 13th May

Five weeks in gaol to-day. The lights went on at six. We are up early. We clean up all the odds and ends, and drink a cup of hot water. It is very cold inside, but wonderful when we go out in the sun. Our food is brought in, but we simply leave it at the door. After 'yard-time' we go upstairs to our cups of hot water, classes, books, knitting. We all feel well, but very hungry by evening.

The Second Day—Saturday, 14th May

We all go to sleep very early. An icy wind blows in the night. We wake to a freezing morning, a bit headachy. M. is keeping a record of every one of us, each day: our pulse, our bowels, our aches and all other symptoms, physical and emotional. We drink hot water, lie on our beds, knit, read, play scrabble, sleep. The day is very long without meals to break it up. We are tired, most of us feel hungry, but we are all cheerful and well. In the evening we each have a lick of salt, and that deadly water. It has turned very cold. We cannot keep awake, and all go to sleep early. One of the women was released today.

The Third Day—Sunday, 15th May

We wake and lie in bed, without much energy. Some have headaches, one or two are not feeling well. This, we find out afterwards, is the worst day of all. Hunger symptoms are still there, and the hot water tastes so horrible, we drink cold water. Our Zulu and Shorthand classes continue, and we have a reading of humorous poetry. This helps to cut up the day. After to-day, the worst is over, and we hope we will not feel so hungry and uncomfortable.

The Fourth Day—Sunday, 16th May

We begin to feel weaker. But hunger symptoms have disappeared. Making beds requires some effort. We have a discussion and decide to send a telegram to the Minister.

In the morning, the Special Branch arrive. We notice them preparing a cell as an office. M. is called out for questioning.

The Colonel comes round, tells us we have made our demonstration, and should now stop. He suggests we will be separated —perhaps some sent to Nylstroom (80 miles away).

In the afternoon we are summoned to stand before the Colonel and Brigadier Steyn, the Deputy-Director of Prisons. He says he has come to tell us that, as we can see, people are now being taken for questioning, that things are moving, that there is no longer any need for us to continue with our refusal to take food. We say we are awaiting a reply from the Minister of Justice, who has not even had the courtesy to acknowledge our petition to him. Steyn tells us we will definitely be separated "for administrative reasons." We inform him that we are continuing with the hunger-strike.

The Fifth Day—Monday, 17th May

Sleeplessness, and a thumping heart. We lie in bed longer than before. That foul taste in the mouth. But on the whole we are remarkably well, if a little slower in our reactions. Two have now been called for questioning, and haven't returned to us. We hold another meeting, and decide on a number of questions for the Colonel. But this morning things start happening fast. More of us are called out for questioning by the Special Branch.

Those who have been questioned fetch their belongings from the big room, and are then locked away in small cells, in pairs.

The routine is the same for all of us. We are taken into a room with several men. We are read that section of the Emergency Regulations which deals with detained people summoned for questioning, and states that they are not entitled to a legal adviser. We are told we are to be asked a number of questions, and that the answers may be used in evidence in any future court action.

All of us, with one or two exceptions, reply that we cannot answer questions unless we know with what offence we are being charged. The questions deal with our political activities in the past, our associations with other individuals, and our views on the present government, apartheid, religion, and so on.

It is a tense, disturbing day. Those questioned spend the night in tiny, dark and very cold and unpleasant cells.

The Sixth Day—Tuesday, 18th May

We are feeling well, but weak. Climbing the stairs is difficult. The questioning proceeds swiftly today. Finally, we are all moved back to our big room again. Only four, who have not been questioned, are kept separate and taken to the small cells.

Some of us cannot go on climbing those stairs twice a day. Better to miss the sun than try it again. We send a telegram to the Minister, and to a Member of Parliament, asking for a reply to our petition. We decide to carry on for a minimum of ten days.

The Seventh Day—Wednesday, 19th May

Every day is a triumph for us. We are a lot weaker, and everything is an effort, but we are surprised that on the whole we have kept well—we expected to feel much worse than we do. Today is visiting day, and we are all determined to see our visitors.

Our classes have stopped, we could not continue with them. We don't read—we find we cannot concentrate. We don't play scrabble. We just talk and talk. What we miss most of all is not so much the actual food, but the whole social ceremony of eating, particularly in the evenings. The day becomes endless without the preparations for a meal, sitting and eating, sitting over our cups of coffee and cigarettes—always the most pleasant time of the day—and cleaning up afterwards. There is no 'middle' to the day, it merges into one long, cold, never-ending procession of hours. The late afternoon is the worst time of all, when we used to do exercises together. Now we can't exercise. We come up from the sun to the great, grey and gloomy rooms. We walk slowly, and evening slowly approaches. It gets darker and colder. There is nothing at all between us and bed-time but hours and hours and hours.

We hear from our visitors that the Minister made a speech in the House in which he said the women detainees at Pretoria Gaol are not on hunger-strike; they are refusing prison food, but have their own stocks of food that they are eating. We are nearly crazy with fury at this news. We immediately prepare a telegram to the Minister protesting strongly against his untruth, and giving the facts. We also prepare a statement for the Colonel,

who comes to see us later. Challenged, he admits that we are not eating our own stocks of food; but he claims we are existing on glucose. We tell him that we ordered 4 lbs. of glucose to break the fast, and that we rationed out 5 tablespoons to each individual to keep in case we were separated. After the fifth day, we made some of the weaker ones take two teaspoonsful of glucose a day. We challenge him to weigh what is left to see how much we have actually taken.

In the afternoon we have another visit from the Colonel. This time he is accompanied by a Captain Cilliers from the Special Branch, who tells us he has just received a message on the telex from Cape Town. The Minister is considering our petition, investigations will be expedited. Cilliers then says he must send a reply to the Minister by telex this afternoon. He urges us to stop the hunger-strike. We ask for a day to consider our reply, and say we will only discuss it with the four who are separated from us. We then have another argument with the Colonel and Cilliers about the glucose. If the Minister knows we are eating, why is he so anxious for us to stop the hunger-strike?

Back in our quarters, and the four are brought back to us. We have a lively discussion. We decide that the Minister's reply is no reply at all, that we have achieved a great deal already, and that because the House of Assembly rises tomorrow, the Minister simply wants to be able to tell Parliament that we have agreed to start eating. We draft our reply:

"*Your communication after 16 days is vague and unsatisfactory, and is in fact no reply to our petition of May 2nd. We are therefore continuing with our hunger-strike. We await more specific information in regard to our release.*"

The Eighth Day—Thursday, 20th May

We are all getting as thin as sticks. Clothes hang on us, we see bones we did not know we possessed. But we are still all cheerful. We stay in bed much later, move more slowly. Washing a couple of articles and making a bed is exhausting.

Early this morning we are handed a letter from the Department of Justice:

"*Madam,*

I have been directed by the Honourable the Minister of Justice to acknowledge the petition signed by yourself and 20 other detainees

on the 2nd May 1960, and to inform you that the demand for your immediate release contained therein is under consideration. A further communication in this regard will be addressed to you in due course.

Yours faithfully,

the Secretary for Justice."

This has the air of an 11th-hour drama about it, with Parliament rising today. But there is nothing in it to make us alter our decision.

The six wives are called unexpectedly to see their husbands—ominous, as this is not the day they usually visit. In the afternoon we are brought upstairs from the yard—the Colonel wants to address us. We climb the stairs slowly, resting all the time. We are all gathered in our room, sitting, as we cannot stand for long. The Colonel is here, with a full retinue of staff, and men we do not know.

He says he has two announcements to make. The first is that he has warrants for every one of us, arresting us under a section of the Emergency Regulations, and detaining us until March 28th, 1961, unless lawfully released before. In silence we hear this; our hearts feel as though they have collapsed inside us. We know this is just some sort of formality; but under the circumstances, we feel stunned. As he finishes, the men get busy taking fingerprints from each one of us all over again—a sort of re-arrest within a prison.

The Colonel then reads the second notice. He names eight of us, and says he has an order for those eight to be removed to Nylstroom at 6 o'clock the following morning.

We greet this with bitter indignation. And find after eight days without food that we cry very easily. This is a blow; three of the women have husbands here, and six of them have children they had hoped to see. Now they will be in a prison that can only be visited by their relatives if they have the whole day to spend driving there and back.

We ask to see the Director of Prisons, and are informed he is in Cape Town; we ask for the Deputy-Director, and after some discussion, the Colonel agrees to call him. While this is going on, the formal arrests and finger-printing continue. And at the same time, some of the women are called down for an examination by a doctor who has come at the request of some of our relatives.

When Brigadier Steyn (the Deputy-Director) arrives, we

request that the women should not be moved, particularly in view of their weakened condition; and that permission be granted for us to apply to Court for an urgent interdict to restrain the authorities from moving them. Steyn argues with us; he will not let us apply to Court for an interdict that night, after which it will, of course, be too late. He refuses to postpone the removals, even for a day.

We get disastrous news from the doctor. He tells one of the women: "You must cease your hunger-strike immediately. Your heart condition is serious, and if you continue you will endanger your life." He says it is not a permanent defect, but due to a lack of potassium to the heart. He warns two other women that they are developing the same condition.

There follows another of our vocal meetings, with more impassioned views expressed, but ultimately we agree to end the hunger strike on medical grounds. We then prepare the following statement:

"*To Colonel Snyman*:

Tonight, several women were examined by Dr. De Villiers, who informed two that their condition was serious, and if they did not stop fasting immediately, they would harm themselves irreparably. One other woman has already been similarly warned. These women do not wish to stop fasting whilst the rest of the women are not eating.

On these medical grounds, and as responsible people, we have therefore decided to call off our hunger-strike tonight. We wish to make it absolutely clear that this is our only reason for doing so.

8.30 *p.m., May 20th,* 1960."

We ring the bell, and tell the wardress to call Matron.