

About Mary-Louise Hooper, 1961

Mary-Louise Hooper, an American, a Quaker and a grandmother, who won her Phi Beta Kappa at Stanford University at the age of 45, is the only white person ever to work inside the African National Congress, major political organization of black South Africa.

Mrs. Hooper immigrated to South Africa in 1955, bought a home near Durban, and worked for two years as assistant to ex-Chief Albert J. Luthuli, three times elected President of the Congress. The government policy of "apartheid," however, eventually led to her arrest, imprisonment and exclusion from South Africa in 1957.

Interest in South Africa grew out of a family missionary connection in that country which developed in her adult years into interracial work in California with the Council for Civic Unity, American Friends Service Committee, and the N.A.A.C.P. From this it was only a step to anti-apartheid activity in South Africa.

Since 1958 Mrs. Hooper has been West Coast Representative of the Africa Defense and Aid Fund, an organization set up and administered by the American Committee on Africa (in New York), of which the Chairmen are John Gunther and the Rt. Reverend James A. Pike. The activities of the West Coast Representative are varied: lecturing, editing a newssheet, arranging public meetings for visiting African leaders, helping African students in the U.S., Ghana, Tanganyika, England and Germany; organizing benefit teas, concerts and theatre parties, and sparking relief drives like the one which last year sent 1500 pounds of clothing, a dozen cartons of drugs and 50,000 vitamins to Algerian refugee students. Currently an appeal for money to assist the 100,000 African refugees from Angola now in the Congo is being initiated. Mrs. Hooper devotes full time, un-salaried, to the work. All lecture fees, as well as audience offerings go to support of the Fund; the West Coast receipts in 1960 totalled more than \$12,000. At least one trip annually to Africa of two or three months duration has made her familiar with Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Congo, Cameroun, Ethiopia, North Africa, and nearly all of East, Central and Southern Africa—24 countries in all. Numbered among her personal friends are many of the leaders of Africa: President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana; Tom Mboya of Kenya, Chief Luthuli, Alan Paton and Oliver Tambo of South Africa; Bishop Trevor Huddleston of Tanganyika, Kenneth Kaunda of Northern Rhodesia, Ahmed Boumendjel of Algeria and Joshua Nkomo of Southern Rhodesia.

Mrs. Hooper has lectured in 12 states under the auspices of many groups such as the World Affairs Council, American Association for the United Nations, League of Women Voters, American Friends Service Committee, English Speaking Union, N.A.A.C.P., Los Angeles Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; and at many colleges and universities, among which were the University of California, the University of Wyoming and Howard University. Innumerable church groups have invited her to address them. A John Russswurm Award for 1960 (given by the National Association of Newspaper Publishers) was recently presented to Mrs. Hooper in recognition of her work in race relations and for Africa.

The African National Congress of South Africa, of which this American woman was elected the first Caucasian member in 1959, has three times appointed Mrs. Hooper to their official delegations at the annual All-African Peoples Conferences held in Accra, Ghana, in 1958; Tunis, 1960, and Cairo, 1961.

A letter to her from the National Executive of the African National Congress shows her relationship to this body:

"Your grasp of the essentials of the political situation in this country, your close association with leaders of the Liberatory Movement in and outside the field of political work, your unflinching response to the call of duty, and the valuable time, energy and material support you have given our struggle — all these combine to make you one of our number, and a leading worker in the struggle for freedom and democracy."

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