

Jan. 15, 1972

"WILL the executives of Wanchai Enterprises Limited please take their places?" The scene was the well-furnished, spacious office of the Detective Superintendent of Wanchai Division. The speaker, or Chairman of the Board, was Ernest Hunt.

\$130,000 a month payoff and Hunt's high life

Life had been good to Taffy Hunt. From modest beginnings he had graduated to the gilded rank of a senior policeman, lining his pockets with graft all the way. Now his 'take' was an enormous £9,000 (then HK\$130,000) a month and his life-style reflected his obvious affluence.

"There was always a big roar of laughter when I made that opening remark," he said. "There would be anything up to the score of us in that room and we were all on 'the take'."

"There was a Chinese gymmaster, and a host of Europeans always present. I don't remember all their names."

A number of officers named Hunt have already left the force.

"Of course we all knew each other. We discussed it openly amongst ourselves, schemed up new projects, queried the pay-offs. We didn't know exactly how much each one was getting but I suppose they all knew I was taking the major share, apart from the Chinese naturally. After all, I was the boss. I was taking the biggest 'take'."

Superintendent Ernest Hunt, as getting his money, he says, from a Detective Sergeant, always in Hongkong in inknotes, always in the now familiar brown envelope. The sergeant was also picking up wine bills at Caldbeck, Gregors, Jardine's and Cottonjee's.

"They were not paltry little sums, either," admits Taffy Hunt. "I had developed a taste for only the best and I enjoyed one of the finest 'cellars' in Hongkong. Another Sergeant was also paying my wine tabs. All I did was place the orders, take delivery and drink the stuff. Oh, I lived the good life all right, make no mistake about that."

[Officers who knew Hunt in Hongkong have confirmed that his wine was always of the highest quality, but it was not possible to trace sales records.]

Not surprisingly, considering his self-confessed willingness to meander sexually from one woman to the next, Ernest Hunt's marriage to Betty suffered. Two boys had been born in the interval but Taffy Hunt and Betty no longer had much in common. She was back in the UK and, although he claims he continued to send her £1,000 (then HK\$14,000) a month by registered mail (all in U.S. dollar bills) he was, effectively, a bachelor gay.

He began to escort some of the most beautiful women in the Colony.

"I preferred Europeans or South Americans. I once had a smashing Peruvian air hostess. She was tremendous in bed, really switched on. Of course, there was the odd local bird that I jumped into the pit with, usually the wives of Hongkong businessmen, but I was never seen in public with them."

Taffy Hunt became a regular at the Hongkong Hilton, Hugo's restaurant (where he befriended Benny the Maitre d' and Lee, the wine waiter) the Taipan Grill, the Captain's Table and Gaddis - all posh places to eat, and expensive, certainly way above the means of a policeman, even a Superintendent.

Head waiters have changed but many on the staffs of all these restaurants recall the free spending ways of Taffy Hunt. They called him "the bad policeman", but with more affection than animosity.

"I was such a good customer that Rolf Heiningner, who owns Gaddis, once allowed me in wearing a sweater. That was unheard of behaviour in Hongkong."

By 1968 Taffy Hunt confesses he had been on 'the take' for nearly 12 years. But by then the money was coming in at such a flow that even he could not spend it all, despite his frequent visits to a jewellery shop on the first floor of a Kowloon hotel arcade.

That was when he met Ursula Holtom, a strikingly attractive blond German girl, divorced from her British husband, Spencer Holtom, an officer in the Royal Artillery from Brockenhurst, Hampshire. Ursula was working in Hongkong as a secretary and the attraction was mutual from the moment they met. She was to play a vital part in safely amassing, and transporting, the corrupt fortune of Ernest Hunt.

They fell deeply in love and began living together.

"I never, at any time, lowered my standards," says Hunt. "We went everywhere together, always paid cash, and I began to buy Ursula lots of marvellous pieces of jewellery. Any fool must have known that I could not keep up that pace on a copper's pay. But why should I worry, I thought, for I know for sure that there were others of higher rank than me, in the police, Government, and other services, that were coining it as well and not getting caught."

As far as corruption by senior authorities is concerned Ernest Hunt is less specific. Apart from one occasion, when he claims he personally handed over a £300 (then HK\$4,800) going away gift to a retiring district Commander, his information is second or third hand.

"But I did give him that money," he insists, "and not in any brown envelope, either. He got it in U.S. currency because that's the way he wanted it."

So how does Ernest Hunt know that corruption extended high over his head?

He says: "I knew several district commanders that took money, for all kinds of things, vice mostly and promotions. I knew a Commissioner who took bribes of some nature, either in cash or in kind."

"I was a detective. It was my job to know these things. I was told by people I had no reason to disbelieve. I have no proof, I did not see money change hands, but you know there is such a thing as circumstantial evidence."

"I once worked a trick when I opened a Buddhist Temple on Lung Cheung Road, Kowloon, in 1972. I had the golden scissors I was given melted down and made into a beautiful gold watch-chain."

He produced the chain to prove his claim.

Notwithstanding his determination to make a fortune Ernest Hunt also laid certain claims to being an extremely competent policeman. He had pulled some diabolical strokes in his time, watched deported Chinese being robbed of the five dollar Government grant by other Chinese, he confesses, once forced a communist suspect to eat his little red book and ignored other crimes, but he also proved his ability, and his courage in a border incident with an officer of the Chinese Militia. It is thoroughly documented.

Indeed, there was some official disquiet about police methods and the first voice to be raised publicly on the issue carried considerable weight. At the opening of the 1971 Criminal Assizes, Chief Justice Sir Ivo Rigby referred to the growing alarm about how some confessions were obtained.

On Thursday, October 12, 1967 Superintendent Ernest Hunt led a successful kidnap plot and snatched a communist Captain from Lo Fong, right under the eyes of a machinegun post.

He describes the incident in graphic detail.

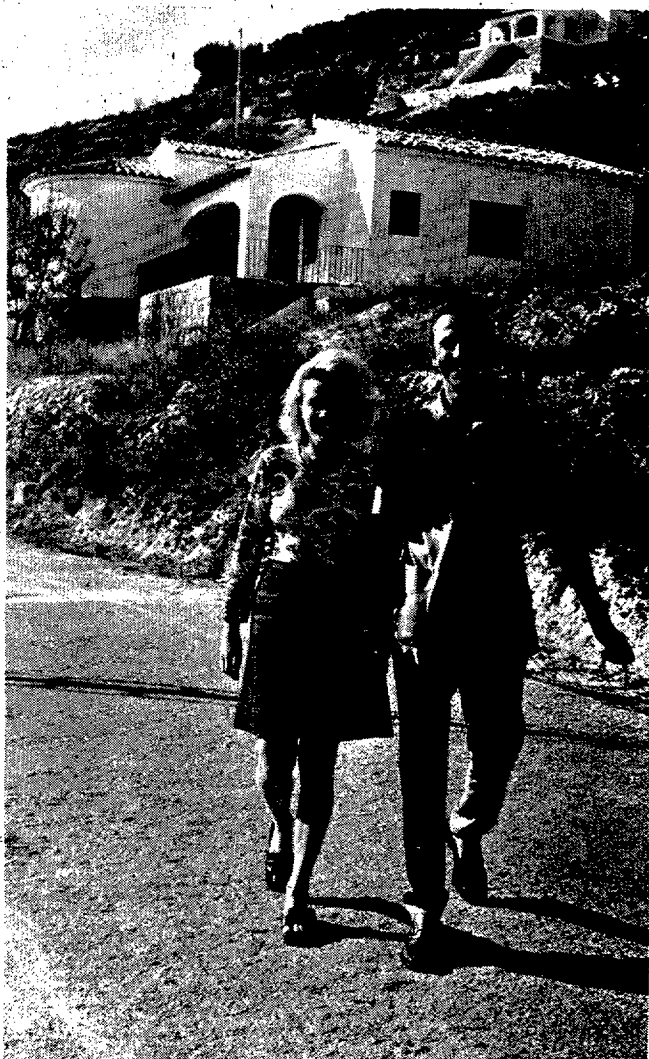
"This swaggering militiaman used to be in the habit of coming over to British territory for tea in the morning, swanking and generally giving us a hard time. He had been doing this with impunity for about five months, and he boasted that the British were afraid to touch him."

"Well, the communists then had several of our men in captivity, and the word came down that we should grab one of theirs and do a swap."

"There was a tea-house near the border and this militiaman

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THEN AND NOW . . . Ursula and Hunt pictured (left) during the anguish of the tense, nerve-racking days of the trial in November 1973 and (right) today outside their fancy \$275,000 villa under the sun in Spain.

ways went there so we drove in a grocery delivery van, to avoid any watching guards from the other side, and waited for the man. Sure enough, he appeared on time soon after eight o'clock in the morning. He threw open the doors of the van and grabbed him.

"He fought like a bloody ferret, kicked me a fierce one in the chest and for a minute looked like breaking loose, even though there were about six of

"I managed to jump across the van and belted him one in the chops, shattering my knuckle in the process. (Taffy Hunt's fourth knuckle on his right hand is missing) and we got the hell out of there. All the time we were scared the communists would open fire on us but they never did.

"We pinned Mao badges on the seat of his trousers, made

"It wasn't all dishonest. I knew some officers who steadfastly refused to go on 'the take'. 'No thanks, Taff,' they would say, and I wouldn't push it. The younger ones were most scared. But although they would refuse it, they were just as guilty as I was in other ways because they kept their mouths shut. They were just as much a part of the conspiracy, only they were not getting anything out of it."

By the late sixties Superintendent Ernest Hunt was transporting his loot out of Hongkong as fast as he could, aided on some occasions by the lovely Ursula who was afterwards to become his wife, but mostly by registered letter to his parents' address in Wales. About the same time he had stashed away in the Bank of America in Hongkong, about £20,000 (about HK\$250,000)

had just bought, and carrying more than £20,000 (about HK\$250,000) with them.

"We told people we would be sleeping in the van during our overland journey," he says, "but we never spent a single night in it. It was first class hotels at every stop. We passed through Dusseldorf where we altered our accounts with the Bank of America. Ursula kept about £10,000 (about HK\$120,000) in her name and I had about £20,000 (about HK\$240,000) in mine."

Back in Hongkong, however, there were ominous signs that things were not going too smoothly on the corruption front. Hunt returned from leave to face, so he says, an angry Brian Slevin, then the Deputy Commissioner and now Commissioner of Police for the Colony. It was the first official move against him, and Hunt's explanation for it was ready.

For nearly two years, between December 1971 and 1973, Ernest Hunt was under investigation. He says his phone was tapped and he was followed nearly everywhere he went by officers of the anti-corruption squad. But he insists today that he experienced no sense of apprehension during that time and he continued to play his part as a corrupt policeman, collecting his cash twice a month as usual.

"I was a good copper and I had excellent contacts within the anti-corruption group. I was tipped off about every move they made. Two British officers actually put it to me one day that the whole thing could be dropped for £45,000 (about

HK\$500,000). I told them to get stuffed."

Hunt believed he had covered his tracks completely, but just to make sure, he and Ursula embarked on a plan to scatter their funds in case they had to make a run for it.

On January 10, even while the Hunts were under surveillance, Ursula left Hongkong on an Alitalia flight to Frankfurt, via Rome, carrying close to U.S.\$60,000 (about HK\$300,000) in her make-up case.

She says: "My ticket was bought for me by a Detective Sergeant and handed to me, along with the money in an envelope, at the airport. I went to Dusseldorf and put it in Taff's account."

Back in Hongkong, on February 12, Ernest Hunt married Ursula in the Registry Office at Yaumati. Their partnership was now legally binding.

The anti-corruption squad was still tailing Hunt so once again Ursula went into action, this time to conceal her vast collection of precious jewels and a considerable sum of money.

Wearing a black wig, she slipped out of their home - Flat B2 1st Floor, Fairland Gardens, 7-10 Homantin Hill Road, Kowloon, and went to the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (Mongkok Branch) where she deposited her goodies in a safe deposit box, again in her maiden name.

Ursula's job was still not finished.

by ANDREW FYALL

● BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

grin and stuck a glass of beer in his hand. Then we got the boys to rustle up a banknote from Hongkong and Shanghai bank and put around the story that he defected willingly to us, for cash."

The local papers at that time carried pictures of Hunt during his arrest.

"We knew that when the time came for him to go back to Hongkong he would have a hard job explaining it all. But to cut a long story short, we eventually exchanged him.

in his wife's maiden name (Ellerbrok). This money was moved on a simple bank transfer order to the Bank of America in Dusseldorf in March, 1971.

As it turned out this was Ernest Hunt's biggest mistake.

All the time corruption was continuing, he claims, and at all levels.

On April 1, 1971 (All Fools Day) Taffy Hunt and Ursula left Hongkong on leave, driving a Volkswagen dormobile he

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Hunt's story: IV and last

Amnesty bargain with ICAC

On September 11, 1972 she once again left Hongkong on a OAC flight to Zurich, this time carrying U.S.\$70,000 (about HK\$350,000) which she again deposited in the Bank of America in Dusseldorf. It must be remembered that the Hunts were still being watched by the anti-corruption squad, although the competence of this authority was, in the light of this evidence, questionable to say the least.

"I was never searched or asked any awkward questions," says Ursula Hunt. "Of course, I was nervous but I always got away with it."

The German account had swelled to something like £80,000 (about HK\$900,000) by now and Ernest Hunt felt confident enough to sign a cheque for his daughter's finishing school at the Institute of Bleu Leman, in Switzerland. It was for £1,765 (about HK\$20,000).

The school authorities kept a note of the cheque number and Mme Rita Huber, director of the Institute, was later to fly to Hongkong and repeat it as damning evidence in 1973.

"We thought we had been so careful," said Hunt. "We made one tiny, but so stupid mistake."

In February, 1973, Deputy Commissioner Christopher Dawson moved against Hunt and gave him one month to explain how he was living above his means. Hunt stalled for a time, then flatly refused, till confident that he could bluff his way out of any hole and rely on the protection of his corrupt friends.

On June 8 another British policeman, senior to Hunt, suddenly left his post and flew to England. His name was Peter Godber. The shock waves were felt throughout the entire Colonial administration.

And the roof fell in on Ernest Hunt.

THE first public move the red-faced British administration made against Superintendent Ernest Hunt was to seize his passport and suspend him from duty. He entered Baptist Hospital suffering from deep vein thrombosis (he is on a regular course of anti-coagulant pills) and it was while he was there that he was charged with living above his means.

There was no accusation of conspiracy or corruption, far more serious crimes on the Hongkong statute books.

On September 11 Mme Rita Hubea, speaking in French, told a hushed court in Hongkong that Hunt's daughter attended her school near Lake Geneva in 1971 and 1972. She had received from Hunt a cheque from the Bank of America in Dusseldorf for £1,765 as a deposit for her schooling. This included basic costs plus a three-week skiing holiday, field trips and taxis.

For the first time, Hunt admits, he experienced alarm.

Hunt moved fast to prevent access to the bank account. His German attorney blocked the release of the account. But for how long?

"From that time on I knew that I was going to go down," admits Hunt. "Not on the charges they could have got me on, and should have got me on, but I prepared myself for a prison sentence of some kind."

On November 1, 1973 Superintendent Ernest Hunt was sentenced to one year in jail and entered the Victoria Remand Centre. He appealed immediately against conviction and his friend Wong Kau, a Chinese millionaire and a thoroughly honest one, says Hunt, put up surety for him in the amount of £10,000 (HK\$120,000).

His appeal was turned down.

On February 15, 1974, the tall gates of Stanley maximum security prison clanged shut behind him.

The Superintendent, who had come such a long way from his days as a bobby on the beat in Glamorgan, was at last behind bars, surrounded by many he had personally helped to put there.

"Actually the inmates treated me like one of their own. I spoke fluent Cantonese so that helped, but they knew I was just as evil as they were so we got along all right. Some of the guards, though, were bastards, and I soon learned that they were just as 'bent' as the coppers on the outside.

"Well, there I was in the pokey, so I realised I had to make the best of it. I had considered escaping while I was on bail but it was Ursula who talked me out of it. There wouldn't have been much of a problem. I knew where to get a Portuguese passport and I had enough friends in the police who would have helped me.

Some of them, I know, were quite anxious to see me out of the Colony in case I talked too much.

"Some of the Chinese guards, as I have said, were right bastards. One of them said to me, in Cantonese: 'When the tiger comes down from the mountain the dogs can bite,' and there was no mistaking his intention. Stanley prison is a miserable hole, the food is foul, and the nights were bitterly cold that winter.

"I was interviewed by a bloke called Henley, the No 2 at Stanley, and he was very hostile.

"I said to him 'the crown you are wearing is on your shoulder, not your bloody head, mate', and I got a great dressing down for that, threatened with prison discipline for insulting an officer. I soon discovered, too, that I had been placed in category A, a classification that was generally reserved for the really hard criminals, murderers and the likes. I was only in for a year and I certainly should never have been in that position, in solitary confinement for most of the time. That was one of the reasons why I later decided to spill some information to the authorities in return for some 'concessions.'

"Half the guards in Stanley were on the 'take' in some way or another, mostly running in heroin to the scores of addicts in there. Some prisoners who had a bit of dough on the

outside were paying the guards for favours, heroin, extra fags, better food."

Isolated behind the grim walls of Stanley, reduced to a miserable existence fearful that the authorities might still be able to prise open his bank accounts and discover his hidden loot, Ernest Hunt set the faithful Ursula to work again.

The contents of the safe deposit box was entrusted to a close and loyal friend. And she went on her international travels once more. Where? Back to Dusseldorf, of course.

Ursula left Hongkong openly on March 6, 1974, on an Air Singapore charter flight to London, from where she flew to Dusseldorf. She managed to withdraw all the cash in the Bank of America - more than £80,000 of it - and bought German Government bonds.

With the tracks blurred once more Ernest Hunt breathed more easily in Stanley Jail. It was time for more wheeling and dealing.

"Hell, I wasn't going to sit in that hole for eight months, was I?" he says. "I reckoned that if I talked, not a lot, but just a little, it should earn me better conditions at least. So, on Easter Monday 1974, I arranged for Ursula to telephone John Prendergast, head of the anti-corruption



The commemorative brooch on Princess Alexandra's hat bearing the police insignia, set in a background of gold and diamonds - caught Hunt's fancy . . . and he got one just like that but only three times as big for Ursula.

squad and a dead straight bloke, and offer my services. He jumped at the chance and came to see me immediately.

"I agreed to give evidence in court on three conditions. The first was that I should be moved from Stanley to Chi Ma Wan, an open prison. The second was an amnesty for me and Ursula, and the third was more visits, one a week instead of one a month.

"I didn't get the first. Chi Ma Wan was too open, but I got the others. And I was moved to Siu Lam psychiatric centre, to room number 9, with air-conditioning, and I was allowed out to cut the grass.

"The date was May 28. I saw one doctor while I was in there, a Dr Jaimani, who treated me for my deep vein thrombosis problem, but no more else. There

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Celebration breakfast after release from prison . . . then champagne and beluga caviar for Hunt and Ursula.

was never any psychiatric treatment."

On Monday morning, October 14, Taffy Hunt emerged to freedom, with his amnesty in his pocket. Waiting for him was an enormous Mercedes limousine belonging to his friend Wong Kau, and, of course, the tearful Ursula. They drove to the Carlton Hotel where two bottles of Dom Perignon champagne were waiting, already chilled.

They had booked a flight to London on the British Airways plane departing Hongkong on October 20. What only a handful of people knew was that Taffy Hunt still had some unfinished business in Hongkong; that he and Ursula had arranged to fly on the Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt at midnight that same night as Mr and Mrs Hansen.

And they were to go out, quietly by the VIP lounge. They were not searched.

Superintendent Ernest Hunt is proud of his achievements and he frequently congratulates himself on his ability to absorb setbacks without emotion and his determination never to lose his nerve while under pressure.

Take the Alexandra brooch, for example. This is Ernest Hunt's version.

"The Princess is the honorary police commandant and when she was in Hongkong all the coppers contributed to a special commemorative brooch, bearing the police insignia, which was presented to her at a great big official function. It was a beautiful piece of work, certainly, the only one of its kind. The insignia was set in a background of gold and diamonds.

"I thought I would like one like it for Ursula.

"It was 1972 and I knew that I was under suspicion, but I thought, 'what the hell, I'm going to have a brooch like that.'

"I went along to a jewellery shop and took with me one of the official handout pictures of the brooch. I said, 'Give me one, just like it.' The Chinese can copy anything, they are famous for it, just like the Japanese, and in a few weeks came back the finished article, only three times as big, a

bloody great monster of a thing that upstages Alexandra's one in no uncertain way.

"It cost me a grand £1,000 (about HK\$12,000) and I paid for it in cash."

Ursula Hunt wears it regularly and it is, as her husband Ernest puts it, a "bloody great thing," extremely heavy and valuable.

Talking about Hunt's purchases of jewellery, a shop assistant said: "Mr Hunt was not like the others. They stopped when their wives had all the jewellery they needed. Hunt went on buying. He bought at least £10,000 (HK\$120,000) worth from us and I believe he bought from many other places too."

Even while he was in the prison psychiatric centre Ernest Hunt claims his thoughts were concentrating on the years ahead. He had lost well over a stone in weight since going inside and he didn't want to emerge in sartorial disarray, with a sagging suit.

"So I arranged to have my tailor come in a couple of times and fit me up for half a dozen suits. He makes rather fine clothes, you know. He was paid in cash."

Hunt paid £30 (about HK\$350) for each of his six suits. The tailor wasn't there the day I called but his staff confirmed that Hunt had been measured for his six suits while still in prison, and he paid for them in cash.

Then, there was the time when Taffy Hunt, still looking ahead, decided to buy a car, not an ordinary car but a really luxurious model. He was still in custody but he asked Ursula to bring in to him all the brochures on the latest model of the BMW.

"Imagine the scene," he says. "There was I in the nick, flipping over the pages of these glossy brochures, examining prices and performance figures. What the hell did I care. I selected a steel grey BMW 3.0 Si, with royal blue upholstery.

"It was just before my release that I told Ursula to go there and arrange for us to pick up the car in Munich in October. She paid DM 25,000 (HK\$47,700) for it, in cash naturally, and in German currency. Where did she get the German marks? Never mind that, she got them. We can leave it at that."

[Actually, on this point, Hunt makes a rare miscalculation. Ursula did not pay DM25,000 for the car. She ordered the car in July - four months before his release - and paid DM31,017 (HK\$59,200) for it, in cash. It was ordered in her own name.

The car salesman, a small, dapper, fussy type of a man, was most precise about the details. He admitted that he was particularly careful when a policeman ordered one of his luxury cars.

"They have been my best customers for many years," he said. "I have sold many cars to policemen, mostly Chinese officers. Lately, though, I have had some opposition from other makers," he declared sadly.

"Ursula was working part-time as a secretary for Trevor Baucher's import/export textile company called Eurotex, at 655 Nathan Road, and earning all of £150 (about HK\$1,700) a month."

And so, on the balmy evening of October 14, 1974, Taffy and Ursula Hunt, sped to the airport at Kai Tak, she clutching a black make-up case she calls, her Kluenka (it's German for chunky jewellery).

They boarded a giant Lufthansa DC 10 and took their seats in economy class.

As the plane soared into the sky, high above the South China Sea he had patrolled in the name of the Queen, Ernest and Ursula Hunt looked back at the twinkling lights of Hongkong, fast receding in the darkness.

They snuggled up closer and he ordered a bottle of champagne.

Ernest Hunt kissed his wife tenderly and promised: "From now on, darling, it's wine and roses all the way."

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