



DESCOM BULLETIN.

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№ 6

DESCOM BULLETIN IS A PUBLICATION OF THE DURBAN DETAINEES SUPPORT COMMITTEE.

On South Africa's doorstep, war-torn Namibia is the scene of the most terrifying forms of violence, including deaths, detentions and torture. Such atrocities are by no means new in the region. Resistance against colonial domination, first German and from 1920 South African, has cost thousands upon thousands of Namibians their lives. Through a century of foreign rule, they have suffered intense repression, violence and exploitation.

Despite United Nations rulings that South Africa occupies Namibia illegally, repeated negotiations at international level, pressure exerted by the churches and the actions, both military and non-military, of SWAPO, South Africa has refused to relinquish all but nominal political control of the territory. It is only recently, with severe internal crises - recession, natural disaster and rising popular resistance - that the South African government has indicated its willingness to negotiate Namibian independence. The war has become too costly to continue.

As part of South African control, some of the overt forms of repression include

- * a special counter-insurgency unit of the South African Police, called Koevoet, which operates inside Namibia and has featured recently in a number of torture murder trials
- * 40 Namibian political prisoners currently being held on Robben Island
- * an untold number of SWAPO members being held without prisoner of war status or observation of the principles of the Geneva Convention in the war zone
- * numerous and often gruesome reports of SADF intimidation of civilians in Ovambo to extract information about SWAPO movements
- * short and long term detentions continuing on the basis of security legislation, which is by proclamation and even more repressive than the South African version



**toivo
is
free
now
free
namibia!**

NATIONAL DETAINEES DAY MARCH 11

ST ANTHONY'S 2PM

In July 1983, Paris Malatsi was detained in Soweto. Less than 48 hours later, he was dead. A white security policeman was suspended from duty and later brought to court. He was convicted of culpable homicide after having been charged with Paris Malatsi's murder. The prosecution has asked for the record to be referred and the accused, Jan Harm van As, is appealing.

This is only the second time since the security laws were implemented in the early 1960s that a criminal charge has been brought against a member of the security police, arising out of a death in detention. DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE SECURITY POLICE ARE BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL? The answer is simply no. The veil of secrecy around detentions will almost inevitably lead to far too little evidence being gathered to allow for a conviction. The circumstances of Paris Malatsi's killing were exceptional. A revolver was shot at point blank range by his interrogator, security policeman van As. The result was that despite the secrecy surrounding detentions an exception had to be made and van As was convicted. Much as we wish the laws to be tightened up on the conduct of security police, this has yet to occur.

It is even less likely to occur in Venda, where an inquest found two security policemen responsible for the death in detention of Tshifiwe Muofhe, but no charges were brought against them. There has since been another death in detention in Venda. At the end of January, 50-year old Samuel Tshikudo was found dead. He had been in detention for 50 days.

GRAHAMSTOWN TREASON TRIAL

After a number of delays, the trial of 11 men began in early February, amidst very tight security. The men, ranging in age from 22 to 57, are charged with high treason, murder and fraud. The leader of the defence team immediately objected to the appointment of one of the assessors, Mr B.P. Loots. In 1964, the defence held, Mr Loots, then a regional magistrate, sentenced 2 of the accused to terms of imprisonment, which were subsequently reduced on appeal. Last week, both the judge, Mr Justice Cloete (who is Judge-President of the Eastern Cape) and Mr Loots withdrew from the case.



REMEMBER THE MARITZBURG DETAINEES

The following people have been in detention since November last year:

Sipho Shezi
Andile Rive
Aubrey Ngcobo
Duma Gqubule
Ben Martins
Faith Matloapane
Mvuyo Tom
Mlungisi
Maphumulo
Sibusiso Ngcobo
Nomasonto Nkosi

Earlier this year, Nondile Matutu and Alan Bongani were detained. They are also being held in PMB.

WE DEMAND THE
THE RELEASE OF
THESE AND ALL
OTHER
DETAINEES.

CISKEI : REPRESSION CONTINUES

Towards the end of last year, many detainees in the Ciskei were released. There have been new detentions this year, however. It is difficult to know exactly how many are presently being held, since this question is never asked in the Ciskei parliament. Those who attempt to gather information from East London estimate the number to be about 50.

General Charles Sebe's trial continues, with 30 state witnesses to be called.

Splits in the Sebe family continue. At the end of January, brother of Lennox Sebe, Namba, was re-detained and in February, appeared in court on charges of fraud and corruption. His mother, Mrs M. Sebe, has publicly declared that "Lennox has brought shame on our family". Lennox's son, Kwano, has been installed as a lieutenant-colonel. Two of his other sons are still behind bars. Another son, Lolo, was killed in a car accident on the way to Charles Sebe's trial. All family members behind bars were refused permission to attend the funeral.

Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa is still being held in the Ciskei. He has been charged with unspecified 'acts of terrorism' and is due to appear in court soon.

The Mdantsane bus boycott is still strong. After seven months of daily walking, over 3 500 workers voted for the continuation of the boycott last week. They also drew up a list of demands which have been given to their representatives, the Committee of Ten, who will negotiate with the Ciskei Transport Corporation to end the boycott.

MGWALI - DETENTIONS LINKED TO THREATS OF FORCED REMOVAL

Mgwali is a small community in the so-called "white corridor" between the Ciskei and the Transkei. The people of Mgwali have been under threat of removal to the Ciskei for many years. They are united and strong in their refusal to move and have resisted all attempts by the South African state to dislodge them by force.

Now the Ciskei authorities are harrassing them. Our last Bulletin (Profile of the Ciskei) showed how chiefs loyal to Lennox Sebe's Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP) benefit from removals. The Ciskei authorities are becoming impatient at the Mgwali community's refusal to move. In mid-February, members of the Mgwali Residents' Association, the body which unites the community against removal, were abducted by Ciskei police, taken into the Ciskei, detained and interrogated for several days. They were then released with a warning from the Ciskei government.

Nine of the ex-detainees have announced that they intend charging the Ciskei authorities with wrongful detention. The residents are now even more determined not to move. As one of them said, "If we leave Mgwali, we are dead".

SUED FOR TORTURE

For the first time, a claim for damages against individual security policemen for torture of a detainee has been heard in the Transvaal Supreme Court. Lt Col. A. Cronwright, Maj. S. Abrie, Maj. J. Visser, Maj. P. Olivier, W-O. L. Prins, Lt H. Pitout, Lt P. Botes, W-O. Fourie, Capt. A. Struwig and Lt J. van Aswegen are the 10 security policemen from whom Auret van Heerden is claiming R113 000 for damages.

Among the allegations are that they

- Strangled him with a wet towel
- Subjected him to electric shocks
- Deprived him of sleep and forced him to stand for long hours and slapped him on the head

Auret van Heerden was in jail for 281 days, without being charged. He was in a cell close to Dr Neil Aggett, who died in detention. Auret gave extensive evidence about maltreatment of Dr Aggett during the inquest. Some of the security policemen now being charged featured in Neil's inquest as being responsible for his interrogation.

the psychology of detention

Part 3 : Coping with detention

In the previous articles (Bulletins 3 and 4 of last year), we spoke about the detention situation itself, and what happens to a person when detained. In this piece, we want to say something about trying to cope in detention.

It is not easy to give suggestions about what to do when you are in detention. As we have said before, it depends on what kind of person you are and how you cope under extreme stress. It also depends on the degree of your political commitment. It also depends on what exactly happens to you during detention. The detention situation seems to be made up of the following elements:

Detention - usually in solitary confinement
Interrogation
Torture

The detention situation these days seems to involve relatively long periods - three to four months and longer. Or else very short periods - a couple of days - where the person is detained for questioning and released. A frightening reality facing all security police detainees is the real possibility of death - security police detention has killed more than 50 people so far. So an initial fear and uncertainty greets all detainees: 'What will happen to me?' 'How will I cope?' It is difficult to point to what the person should do during interrogation, especially when this involves long (more than six hours) and frequent sessions with a team of very harsh and brutal interrogators. What we can say, though, is that three reactions commonly occur during interrogation:

Dependence
Dread
Debility

The most difficult phase of interrogation is when the detainee feels close to and dependent on the interrogators. What the person should try to remember, although in the situation it is very difficult, is that the interrogators have manipulated you into feeling dependent upon them and that they are not your allies and don't care about you, other than getting information out of you. During interrogation, you might become very scared of your interrogators and what they might do, seeing as they will threaten you often if you don't tell them what they want to know. Furthermore, you might become very despondent and depressed, because you think you have given over important information or split on your comrades or friends. You might also become very morose and want to give up, just to end the interrogation. What is important is to try to remember that these reactions are what is expected under an abnormal situation like security police interrogation and detention. And your comrades, friends and family would not expect you to withstand this brutality and violation of your rights as a person.

It is just about impossible to say anything about what might happen during being tortured - take for example the atrocious things Auret van Heerden is at present claiming he had to withstand while being tortured during his detention. In the case of severe physical torture, it is your strength and will of a physical and psychological kind against the power and savagery of the security police and their detention situation. All that can be humbly said is to try to hold on and to believe in the people outside who are still supporting and caring about you - they are the true patriots of South Africa and worth struggling for.

In the next issue, we will give some suggestions on how to cope with long-term detention on a day-to-day basis when interrogation sessions and/or torture seem over.