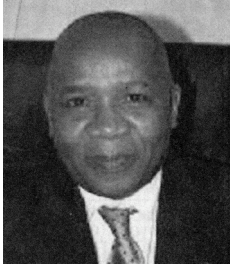


SOLOMON SOKUPA aka 'SOKS'



In the Sunday Times of the 4 October 2009, (in the Business Times, Careers 3 section), I found this picture of my comrade SOKS.

It took me a while to make him out in the business pages. My magnifying glasses came to my rescue.

Why do I remember this face when so many thousands took part in the struggle to liberate South Africa?

Soks was in my hut in Maseru West on the 5th July 1979. Having had lunch, we waited for Father John to deliver our *Sechaba*, which when opened bombed all six of us.

Soks had a deep hole in his forehead. He was treated in Tanzania and when I saw him again there was hardly a mark. **If we had a great friendship before 5 July 1979, the bomb sealed our families for life.**

Nomaqabi (Soks and Siphokazi's eldest daughter) was 10 years old, when she spent a night with Sewale's children – the same night that home was burnt by the SADF raid into Lesotho. (She is in my book *Le Rhona Re Batho*.)

Recently she came with the family to visit and is now the mother of a little boy!

Soks and Siphokazi's second child was Mayibuye, born just before we were bombed. While we lay on our beds with bottles of blood attached to our hands, Soks and I talked about Mayibuye. Siphokazi, his wife had not recovered from childbirth, her breasts swollen with the milk she could not feed to her baby. One of the child's grandmothers had taken him home to the Eastern Cape.

Holding Sok's hand, I felt the pain of a father who was separated from his son virtually after birth, his pain for his wife and the pain of the bomb to his head.

Footprints

If my memory serves me well, I think news of Cuba's offer of medical studies for Siphokazi arrived while we were in hospital.

Sukhthi, my teenage daughter, arrived from school in Swaziland at the hospital. She was not allowed to see me. I saw her screaming 'I will not kill my mother'. But Lesotho security would not budge. I think it was Monroe Gilmour my American friend who took Sukhthi home that night.

When some semblance of family had returned to the Soks family, they all arrived to celebrate the award of a doctorate to me from UDW in 1998. It was a happy occasion!

Soks told me then that Mayibuye wanted to become a chef. They had hoped he would be in a "briefcase-carrying-job". I added that if it was Mayibuye's life that we were concerned with, he had to choose the life he wanted to live.

Later I heard that Mayibuye was traveling and he had called from Japan. It was part of his training.

For those who divide the ANC into exiles and those who stayed home, do these exiled lives look any better than yours?

When Mayibuye met his family again, you will have to ask him!

Phyllis Naidoo
Durban
5 October 2009.

