

MOTHER OVERJOYED AT DETAINEE'S RELEASE

S-Tune 216/70 By MARGARET SMITH

COOLSHED BLAST: 5 IN COURT

Four men tortured,
defence alleges

ALLEGATIONS WERE MADE at the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court today

An e...

permit to

isolation

GROUP AREAS ACT

AFFECTS

SPORTS

TICKY BARNES

LET YOUR SON

ALWIE SHOW

YOU THE WAY

ILY MAIL, Friday, April 2, 1962

Three get jail for aiding escapee Lee

Rand Daily Mail, 14 December, 1969

THE RED ACT TRIAL

★ FROM PAGE 8

'Practically forced'
woman tells judge

ishwande Nkomo, one of the
accused, accompanied her.

Winnie gave her a small

said nothing, but had not told
her to take it off.

She said her sister did ...

THE JOURNAL

MOTHER OVERJOYED AT DETAINEE'S RELEASE

S-Tune 216/70 By MARGARET SMITH

COOLSHED BLAST: 5 IN COURT

Four men tortured,

Fatima Adam | Ameen Cajee | Laloo Chiba | Magan Narsee Chhiba | Yusuf Isaacs
Narendra Jasmath | Abdulhay Jassat | Ahmed Kathrada | Wolfie Kodesh | Mac Maharaj
Wilton Mkwayi | Kista Moonsamy | Indres Naidoo | Shirish Nanabhai | Faker Salie
Reggie Vandeyar | Solly Vania | Bobby Vassen | Tommy Vassen

Men of Dynamite:

Pen Portraits of MK Pioneers

Rashid Seedat and Razia Saleh (Editors)

First published by the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation in 2009

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Contents

Abbreviations	8
Photographs	9
Dedication	14
Message by Cyril Ramaphosa	15
Preface by Ahmed Kathrada	16
Chapter 1 Introduction	19
Chapter 2 Background	23
Chapter 3 Story of the “Men of Dynamite”	37
Chapter 4 Pen portraits of the “Men of Dynamite”	56
<i>Fatima “Fati” Adam</i>	58
<i>Ameen “Doha” Cajee</i>	59
<i>Laloo “Isu” Chiba</i>	65
<i>Magan Narsee Chhiba</i>	82
<i>Yusuf Isaacs</i>	84

<i>Narendra "Nanoo" Jasmath</i>	86
<i>Abdulhay Jassat</i>	88
<i>Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada</i>	94
<i>Wolfie Kodesh</i>	105
<i>Mac Maharaj</i>	110
<i>Wilton Mkwayi</i>	119
<i>Kista Moonsamy</i>	122
<i>Indres Naidoo</i>	127
<i>Shirish Nanabhai</i>	136
<i>Faker Salie</i>	143
<i>Reggie Vandeyar</i>	146
<i>Solly Vania</i>	155
<i>Bobby Vassen</i>	158
<i>Tommy Vassen</i>	162
Chapter 5 People, events and songs associated with "Men of Dynamite"	169
<i>Dr Essop Jassat</i>	170
<i>Ahmed Essop "Quarter" Khota</i>	173

<i>Moosa “Mosie” Moolla</i>	176
<i>Peter Moonsammy</i>	181
<i>Suliman “Babla” Saloojee</i>	183
<i>Maniben’s diary</i>	186
<i>Longest night</i>	187
<i>Escape from Marshall Square</i>	192
<i>Pinjre ke panchhi</i>	197
<i>Parna janda</i>	199
Interviews	202
Other primary sources	205
Secondary sources	206
Endnotes	209

Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa – was banned in 1950 and was secretly re-established in 1953 as the South African Communist Party (SACP)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (was also known as East Germany)
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), military wing of the ANC
MP	Member of Parliament
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NP	National Party
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA	South Africa
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SAIC	South African Indian Congress (not long after the Congress became dormant, the same abbreviation would unfortunately be used for the South African Indian Council, which was a statutory body created during the apartheid years to supposedly represent the views of the Indian community); the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee was established in early 1981 to oppose the South African Indian Council elections that were to be held in November 1981
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
TIYC	Transvaal Indian Youth Congress
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	United Democratic Front
YCL	Young Communist League

Photographs

Title and credit	Page
<i>Cyril Ramaphosa – Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	15
<i>Ahmed Kathrada – Yunus Chamda</i>	16
<i>Men of Dynamite Collective with Kista Moonsamy, Abdulhay Jassat, Reggie Vandeyar and Shirish Nanabhai, Johannesburg, October 2009 – Kevin Mark Pass</i>	20
<i>Dr Dadoo addressing a rally at Red Square, Fordsburg – Navin J Desai, courtesy of Ahmed Kathrada</i>	23
<i>Between 1860 and 1911, 152 184 indentured labourers from India arrived in Natal – Museum Africa</i>	26
<i>Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi with an inscription by Gandhi to Thambi Naidoo in 1909 – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	28
<i>NIC leading members IC Meer and JN Singh – Ahmed Kathrada Private Collection</i>	31
<i>TIC elections held on Natalspruit Sport Ground in 1946 – Mosie Moolla Private Collection</i>	32
<i>On the roof of Kholvad House: L-R: Yusuf Cachalia (SAIC), DU Mistry (SAIC), Dan Tloome (SACTU/ANC), Goolam Pahad (SAIC), OR Tambo (ANC), David Bopape, (Tvl ANC), Molvi I Cachalia (SAIC), 1953 – Herb Shore, courtesy of Ahmed Kathrada</i>	35
<i>March prior to the infamous Sharpeville massacre, 1960 – Museum Africa</i>	36
<i>Mosie Moolla and Nelson Mandela in the early 1960s – Mosie Moolla Private Collection</i>	38
<i>Leaflet (manifesto) issued by Umkhonto we Sizwe on the day of its launch on 16 December 1961 – Dawn: Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Souvenir issue: 25th anniversary of MK</i>	40
<i>MK logo – www.anc.org.za</i>	41
<i>A fallen pylon the night after MK was launched, 1961 – Bailey’s African History Archive</i>	43
<i>Aerial view of the Liliesleaf farm house used as an exhibit during the Rivonia Trial – National Archives (Brenthurst Collection)</i>	45
<i>Drawing illustrating cutting of telephone wires in progress – Dawn: Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Souvenir issue: 25th anniversary of MK</i>	46
<i>Exhibit during Little Rivonia Trial: Study of different types of demolitions – National Archives (State vs Mkwayi and others, WLD 578/64)</i>	47
<i>The old Fordsburg Post Office, 1904 – Museum Africa</i>	50
<i>Nana Sita in the middle, with “Nehru” cap – Seedat Family Private Collection</i>	52
<i>Collage of press cuttings – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	54
<i>A panel from Nelson Mandela: the Authorised Comic – Courtesy of Umlando Wezithombe</i>	55
<i>Fati on her wedding day with her sister, Rookie – Courtesy of Rookeya Vally</i>	58
<i>Ameen Cajee – Indicator newspaper</i>	59
<i>Volunteers during the Defiance Campaign receive a final briefing, Anderson Street, 27 May 1952 – Museum Africa</i>	60
<i>Doha with Ayesha Dawood, IC Meer and Nelson Mandela, Lenasia, c1991 – Kadir Saloojee Private Collection</i>	60

<i>Doha was cited as a co-conspirator in the Little Rivonia Trial – National Archives (State vs Mkwazi and others, WLD 578/64)</i>	63
<i>A newsletter of the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee, 1981 – Seedat Family Private Collection</i>	63
<i>Ameen and his wife Aisha in Flat 13, Kholvad House – Indicator newspaper</i>	64
<i>Isu Chiba – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	65
<i>Chiba siblings: L-R: Isu, Daya, Jashoo, Raman and Luxmi, 1936 – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	66
<i>Isu with his uncle, Dajee Pema, shortly before going to India – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	68
<i>Isu's wife Luxmi with their daughters, Gita, Yashvanti and Kaylash – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	69
<i>Isu and Kathy having a discussion at the launch of the exhibition on Walter and Albertina Sisulu, 2008 – Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	71
<i>Drum magazine's report on the Rivonia Trial – Bailey's African History Archive</i>	73
<i>Isu's warrant of committal – National Archives (State vs Mkwazi and others, WLD 578/64)</i>	75
<i>In 1977, the South African government allowed the media to photograph the political prisoners on Robben Island – National Archives (Nelson Mandela Prison Files)</i>	77
<i>Isu receiving the Order of Luthuli, Silver from President Thabo Mbeki, 2004 – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	79
<i>The Chiba family portrait, c1943: L-R: Isu, Raman, Jashoo, Chiba (father), Dahi (mother), Luxmi, Govind and Daya – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	80
<i>Magan Narsee Chhiba – Courtesy of Jaimati Chhiba</i>	82
<i>Magan Narsee and his wife Jaimati – Courtesy of Jaimati Chhiba</i>	83
<i>Yusuf with his sister Amina Cachalia and his wife Shireen – Courtesy of Amina Cachalia</i>	85
<i>Narendra Nanoo Jasmath – Courtesy of Shanti Jasmath</i>	86
<i>Nanoo Jasmath and his wife Shanti – Courtesy of Shanti Jasmath</i>	87
<i>Abdulhay Jassat – Kevin Mark Pass</i>	88
<i>Central Indian High School (better known as Congress School) sports day – Kadir Saloojee Private Collection</i>	89
<i>Mosie and Abdulhay, with Ebrahim Desai (centre), were born on the same day and have shared many common political escapades – Mosie Moolla Private Collection</i>	91
<i>Abdulhay and his wife Harlene – Mosie Moolla Private Collection</i>	93
<i>Ahmed Kathrada – Dana Gluckstein</i>	94
<i>Kathy disguised as Pedro, when he went underground – Police Files, Mayibuye Centre</i>	95
<i>Kathy's prison card – Matthew Willman</i>	96
<i>Kathy's prison uniform and utensils – Ahmed Kathrada Private Collection</i>	97
<i>A young Kathy – Ahmed Kathrada Private Collection</i>	98
<i>Some of Kathy's close comrades from the 1950s, including JB Marks, Yusuf and Molvi Cachalia, Goolam Pahad and Mervy Thandray – Mayibuye Centre</i>	100

<i>A poster of the 156 accused during the Treason Trial of 1956-1961 using Eli Weinberg's famous collage of the trialists – South African History Archive</i>	102
<i>Kathy at the launch of Memoirs at the Constitutional Court, Johannesburg, 2004 – Yunus Chamda</i>	103
<i>Wolfie Kodesh – Mayibuye Centre</i>	105
<i>CPSA poster demanding African soldiers be given guns, 1942 – South African History Archive</i>	106
<i>Cover of New Age – Digital Innovation South Africa</i>	107
<i>Photo of Nelson Mandela taken in the early 1960s when he was dubbed the "Black Pimpernel" by the media – Courtesy of Azhar Saloojee, Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	108
<i>Wolfie at a rally in London, 1990 – Mayibuye Centre</i>	109
<i>Mac Maharaj – ANC Department of Information and Publicity</i>	110
<i>Cover of Mandela's speech, probably printed by Mac – Maniben Sita Collection, Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	112
<i>A list of documents found at Mac's place, 21 Pierce Street, Doornfontein used in the Little Rivonia Trial. Mac was accused No.5 – National Archives (State vs Mkwayi and others, WLD 578/64)</i>	114
<i>Part of the charge sheet against Mac "Accused No.5" in the case State vs Mkwayi and others – National Archives (State vs Mkwayi and others, WLD 578/64)</i>	115
<i>Transcription of Mandela's autobiography into very small print by Mac – National Archives</i>	116
<i>Mac inscribed this photo for Natalya, daughter of his friends Issy and Ramnie Dinat in 1977 in London, soon after he fled into exile – Courtesy of Natalya Dinat</i>	117
<i>Mac Maharaj at an ANC rally in Lenasia in 1993 – Indicator newspaper</i>	118
<i>Wilton Mkwayi – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	119
<i>Wilton Mkwayi standing in the front right with his friends and comrades in the 1950s – Mayibuye Centre</i>	120
<i>The file cover of the trial State vs Mkwayi and others – National Archives (State vs Mkwayi and others, WLD 578/64)</i>	120
<i>Press conference held in Soweto soon after the release of Ahmed Kathrada, Elias Motsoaledi and Wilton Mkwayi and others in October 1989 – Indicator newspaper</i>	121
<i>Kista Moonsamy – Kevin Mark Pass</i>	122
<i>Kista's ID card – Kista Moonsamy Private Collection</i>	122
<i>Paul Joseph in exile in London, c1970s – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	123
<i>The newsletter Spark kept the people informed about events during the repressive era of the sixties – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	124
<i>Kista and Rosie Moonsamy – Kista Moonsamy Private Collection</i>	126
<i>Indres Naidoo – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	127
<i>Picture sent to Indres while he was on Robben Island: L-R: Ramnie, Ama (mother), Murthi, Shanti and Prema – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	128
<i>Natalya Dinat, Indres's niece, attended the ANC's Consultative Conference in 1985 held in Kabwe, Zambia – Courtesy of Natalya Dinat</i>	128

<i>Indres Naidoo as a young boy – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	128
<i>Women gathering to march onto the Union Buildings in 1956 – Mayibuye Centre</i>	129
<i>Indres Naidoo's warrant of committal – National Archives (State vs Vandeyar and others, WLD 188/63)</i>	130
<i>Indres and his mother Ama Naidoo on the day of his release, 13 May 1973 – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	131
<i>Indres and his son Bram – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	132
<i>Albie Sachs – Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	134
<i>Naidoo family get together, including Shirish Nanabhai and his son Kamal, early 1990s – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	135
<i>Shirish Nanabhai – Kevin Mark Pass</i>	136
<i>TIYC Annual Conference, 26 August 1962 held at the Duncan Hall, Johannesburg: L-R: Indres Naidoo, Shirish Nanabhai, Mosie Moolla, Winnie Mandela, Barry Higgs and Khalil Saloojee – Mayibuye Centre</i>	137
<i>A trip to Cape Town organised by the TIYC. Essop Jassat is standing left back. Seated are Mosie Moolla and Babla Saloojee – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	138
<i>Report in The Star, 13 May 1963 – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	139
<i>Shirish and Rajula's wedding, 1978 – Shirish Nanabhai Private Collection</i>	141
<i>Collage of pictures of Shirish – Shirish Nanabhai Private Collection</i>	142
<i>Faker Salie – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	143
<i>Langlaagte Railway Station – Museum Africa</i>	145
<i>Reggie Vandeyar – Kevin Mark Pass</i>	146
<i>Reggie as a young boy – Reggie Vandeyar Private Collection</i>	147
<i>L-R: Reggie, Chinnamal (mother), Sushila (daughter), Assoo (wife) and Sharmala (niece-seated), c1950s – Reggie Vandeyar Private Collection</i>	147
<i>The Johannesburg City Hall was used for many protest meetings in the 1950s – Museum Africa</i>	148
<i>Ambassador Hotel – Museum Africa</i>	150
<i>Reggie sitting in between Henry Makgothi and Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Congress of the People – Reggie Vandeyar Private Collection</i>	150
<i>A photograph of the signal box used as evidence in Reggie's trial – National Archives (State vs Vandeyar and others, WLD 188/63)</i>	152
<i>Reggie's warrant of committal – National Archives (State vs Vandeyar and others, WLD 188/63)</i>	153
<i>A letter to his daughter, Sushila, from Robben Island – Reggie Vandeyar Private Collection</i>	154
<i>L-R: Solly Vania, Raman Chiba, Billy Naidoo and Isu Chiba, August 1963 – Laloo Chiba Private Collection</i>	155
<i>Teachers at the Central Indian High School (Congress School) – Mayibuye Centre</i>	156
<i>Bobby Vassen – Vassen Family Private Collection</i>	158
<i>Govind Chiba, Bobby's close friend on the left – Vassen Family Private Collection</i>	159
<i>Bobby at home, London, 2009 – Vassen Family Private Collection</i>	161
<i>Tommy Vassen – Vassen Family Private Collection</i>	162
<i>Tommy with Govind Chiba and a friend – Vassen Family Private Collection</i>	163

<i>Christmas lunch in London, 1987. This photo was sent to Kathy whilst he was on Robben Island – Ahmed Kathrada Private Collection</i>	164
<i>Pamphlet by the South African Indian Congress in support of Nana Sita – Maniben Sita Collection, Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	166-167
<i>Tommy and Dela Vassen – Vassen Family Private Collection</i>	168
<i>Essop Jassat at Wits Medical School – Essop Jassat Private Collection</i>	170
<i>Speaking at an Anti-SAIC meeting, Lenasia, 1982 – Seedat Family Private Collection</i>	172
<i>Essop Jassat, Reggie Vandeyar and Ramlal Bhoolia at CODESA – Essop Jassat Private Collection</i>	172
<i>Ahmed Essop “Quarter” Khota – Courtesy of Khalik and Nafissa Mayet</i>	173
<i>Quarter and his wife Ayesha – Courtesy of Khalik and Nafissa Mayet</i>	175
<i>At his 70th birthday party in 1998 with Goolam Pahad and Kathy; grand daughters Mahdiya Coovadia & Azminah Mayet – Courtesy of Khalik and Nafissa Mayet</i>	175
<i>Mosie as a young child – Mosie Moolla Private Collection</i>	176
<i>Molvi Cachalia with nineteen resisters from the Transvaal, March 1947 – Seedat Family Private Collection</i>	177
<i>The Freedom Charter was adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, June 1955 – Seedat Family Private Collection</i>	178
<i>The story of Mosie’s escape with Abdulhay Jassat, Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich was featured in the Sunday Review, Sunday Independent in 1994 – Abdulhay Jassat Private Collection</i>	179
<i>Photo taken in Tunduma, at the Tanzania and Zambia border: L-R: Alibhai, a friend, Zubeida, Mosie and their children Tasneem and Azaad, 1968 – Mosie Moolla Private Collection</i>	180
<i>Mosie addressing the International Youth Conference Against Apartheid, New Delhi, India, January 1987 – Mosie Moolla Private Collection</i>	180
<i>Peter Moonsammy – Courtesy of Roshnee Moonsammy</i>	181
<i>Funeral Service Programme – Seedat Family Private Collection</i>	182
<i>Suliman “Babla” Saloojee’s Identity Card – Courtesy of Rookeya Vally</i>	183
<i>Babla and Rookie Saloojee – Courtesy of Rookeya Vally</i>	184
<i>Babla’s funeral, September 1964 – Courtesy of Rookeya Vally</i>	185
<i>Maniben’s diary: “Bapuji” is Gujarati for father. She is referring to Nana Sita who is in jail – Maniben Sita Collection, Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	187
<i>Press cutting on Gammat Jardine – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	188
<i>The car used to drive to the Riverlea Station – National Archives (State vs Vandeyar and others, WLD 188/63)</i>	189
<i>The toolshed – National Archives (State vs Vandeyar and others, WLD 188/63)</i>	190
<i>Press cuttings of the arrest – Naidoo Family Private Collection</i>	191
<i>On 11 August Maniben Sita notes the escape in her diary – Maniben Sita Collection, Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>	192
<i>Marshall Square – Museum Africa</i>	193
<i>Write up on Greef in the Sunday Independent, 1994 – Abdulhay Jassat Private Collection</i>	194
<i>Fordsburg, c1950s – Bailey’s African History Archive</i>	194
<i>Songbook of the TIYC with various freedom songs – Seedat Family Private Collection</i>	201

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the “Men of Dynamite” and their families. They will always be remembered as individuals who bore the trials and tribulations of exile, imprisonment, banning, torture and hardship with great courage and determination.

Message

Men of Dynamite is an important contribution to the growing body of work on the history of the struggle in South Africa. The main area it illuminates is the contribution of members of the Indian community to Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC) in the Johannesburg area in the early years of its existence.

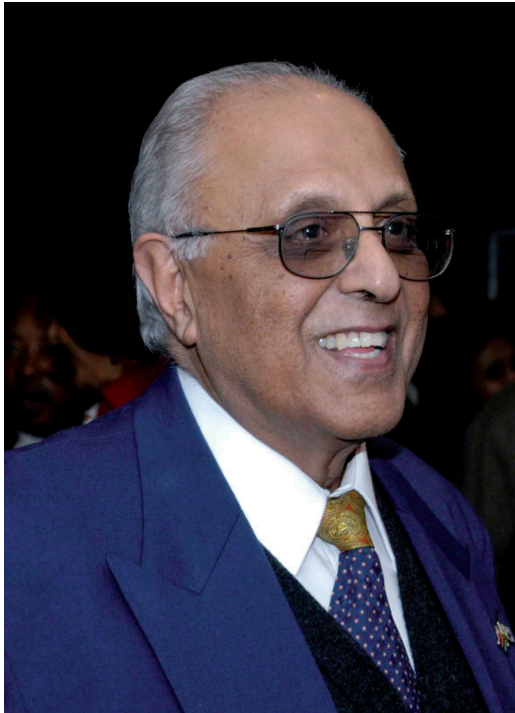
The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation is happy to be the publisher of this book for several reasons. Firstly, it is consistent with our mandate of disseminating the history of resistance in South Africa. Secondly, it demonstrates non-racialism in practice during the darkest days of apartheid, which is also a remit of the foundation. Thirdly, the book will be launched on 12 December 2009, to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the deaths of the young MK cadres Prakash Napier and Yusuf Akhalwaya. In so doing, we are able to connect the experiences of the first and last generations of MK fighters. Finally, this book is a fitting tribute to Comrade Kathy who celebrates his 80th birthday this year as well as the numerous heroes who are profiled here.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who spent many hours working on and researching the book to give us an attractive and interesting read.

Cyril Ramaphosa
Chairperson of the Board of Trustees
Ahmed Kathrada Foundation
December 2009



Preface



The initiators of this project, the researchers, the contributors, the editors, and the Foundation have to be congratulated for the publication of this book. Because of the restrictive apartheid laws and practices, MK units were made up largely of men and women who lived in particular group areas. It is therefore not designed to be a history of MK; but rather an attempt to record albeit briefly, the actions, experiences, the discipline and above all the courage of a relatively small number of MK units.

While not in any way lessening the contributions of any of the comrades, I wish to single out one particular unit, as well as several individuals.

Reggie, Shirish and Indres are friends and comrades who I knew and worked with for many years before their arrest. Theirs was the first MK unit to be arrested, and the very first unit to be sent to Robben Island. The three comrades served their ten-year sentences at a time when conditions on Robben Island were at their worst. Hard labour, insults, humiliation, assaults were the order of the day. In fact Indres was punished with four lashes. In spite of all the hardship and suffering, they emerged with their heads held high, proud, undefeated, loyal and determined.

I was under house arrest at the time of their arrest, and I can still recall the anguished phone calls from their families, asking me to do something. The very worst experience was when Ama Naidoo phoned to say that Indres had been brought home under escort, while still bleeding from a gunshot wound! I never felt so shocked, frightened and helpless, because my house-arrest order prohibited me from leaving the flat at the stroke of 7. I rushed out to the lawyers, who immediately went into action. Alas, although clearly in contravention of the law, the police brazenly refused to allow them access. Because the lawyers were thwarted in their efforts for good reason, we then turned to the one-and-only Babla. I always regarded him as my young brother. Loved by all. All he requested were toiletries and clean underwear, plus some cash, and off he went to Marshall Square. He returned later after seeing not only the three, but also Laloo Chiba and Abdulhay Jassat. A typical example of what Babla managed to accomplish against seeming odds. The lawyers were now in possession of the information they needed.

Just one more incident about Babla – partly amusing but very tragic. The Picasso Club was a group of about six members of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, specialising in slogan

painting on walls, and putting up posters. One very cold night, after having completed the task of putting up posters, there was one poster left. Babla dared us to put it on the wall of Grays Building, the Security Police headquarters. Mission accomplished, and as we were on the way home, the police gave chase and caught up with us. Luckily we were let off with a warning, and we went smilingly home. But by no stretch of imagination could we foresee what was to come.

It was on a Saturday of September 1964. We had been on Robben Island for barely three months. We had already been locked up in our single cells when Walter returned from his first six-monthly visit from Ma Sisulu. All of us eagerly waited for him to give us some news from home. But Ma Sisulu brought news that none of us ever wanted to hear. Babla had been killed and thrown out of the windows of the seventh-floor building by the sadistic murderer, Swanepoel. THE WINDOWS OF THE SAME GRAYS BUILDING WHERE BABLA HAD PUT ON THE LAST POSTER!! There was dead silence as we collectively tried to contemplate the enormity of the tragedy. My brother and comrade Babla was dead! Dear Babla, loved by all who knew him. We were never going to hear his gruff and cheerful voice again! Forty-five years have gone by, we will never forget him. However, we pay tribute to his widow Rookie who bravely and unceasingly kept his memory alive, and in doing so she became and remained a more determined political activist.

There is Laloo Chiba, Mr L, as I call him; my dear friend, comrade, brother. There is not space enough to write about him. Kind, caring, generous and modest to a fault, brave, loyal and dedicated. Much can be written about each of these adjectives, but none can do sufficient justice to describe him. Salt of the earth.

Then Prakash and Yusuf. During the weeks after our release, they were among the comrades who had been assigned to stand guard outside my late brother's house, where I was staying. They were generally in the midnight-to-morning shift. My late sister-in-law Ayeshabai was a very caring and generous lady. Every morning she would insist on Prakash and Yusuf to come in and have some breakfast. Much to my regret I can't remember Yusuf ever accepting her invitation. Therefore I never really came to know him as well as I would have liked to. But Prakash frequently joined us, and it was my good fortune to know him better. Now, Ayeshabai was not comfortable with English or Afrikaans; and Prakash did not know Gujarati. But I marvelled at the way the two of them could converse morning after morning, with Ayeshabai using a mixture of Afrikaans, English and Gujarati. They seemed to enjoy talking to each other.

In December 1989, Shan and I were in Cape Town, staying at our friend Eddie Daniels's place. One morning Shan was called to the phone. After he joined me he was completely and unusually silent. It took him some time to tell me of the tragic death of Yusuf and Prakash!! Naturally it came to us as a great shock. It was only that morning that I learnt for the first time that the two comrades were trained MK operatives. And it was only much later that I learnt more about them. When looking back now I realize and appreciate their calibre. They were hard working, utterly dedicated, modest, highly disciplined and courageous. They were true examples of activists. The more I learnt about them, the greater is our respect, and greater is our loss.

For me, this Preface would be incomplete without saying something about Ameen Cajee and Shan. Like the others mentioned, they two are exceptional cadres. We only came

to know about Shan a few years ago at a meeting of the Lenz ANC Branch. There, not only did we get confirmation of his MK membership, but also we learnt a great deal about his activities, and the activities of other MK units under his command.

As with Mr L, there is not space enough to do justice to Shan and Ameen. Ameen was a soldier's soldier. Extremely courageous and dedicated he was not one to dabble much with theory. He was par excellence a practical man. I owe a great deal to him. He stayed at 13 Kholvad House for many years. When I was placed under house arrest, I was not allowed to have any visitors. Not even my mother was allowed. In fact I last saw her towards the end of 1962, when I broke my house arrest order by quickly going down to the car to meet her.

At that time Ameen was working in Wolmaranstad, and I really needed someone to share the flat. The idea was he would be allowed to have visitors, and in case of a police raid, he could claim my visitors as his. It took one phone call from me, and Ameen was on the train to Johannesburg, and to Flat 13.

A few months later, one day in about March/April 1962, I was given an order from the leadership to go underground in about four hours time! I was to leave the flat that I had occupied since 1947, all the furniture, my car etc. I confided in Ameen, and left everything to him. He gladly accepted the position. But, true to his word, he insisted on keeping it under my name. Even the phone. In many of the letters and messages I received in prison from him, he reiterated that the flat belonged to me.

So much so that on the day of our release Ameen came and told me that he had alternate accommodation, and I should move back into Flat 13. But not before his daughter and my godchild, Djamila would allow me. After a couple of weeks she said I could move in. And what did I find? Djamila had the entire flat re-furnished! Such friendship and loyalty is not easy to find.

How many people know that Ameen, at great risk, put his little dry-cleaning shop at the disposal of comrades to have their meetings. These include David Webster, Neil Aggett and others. Fortunately Comrade Winnie Mandela is still alive to bear testimony to this part of Ameen's contribution.

There is so much more that can be said about MK cadres, and about those who played a participatory role in MK activities.

My concluding wish is that someone, or some institution would initiate a project to record and publicise the role of martyrs who lost their lives in the struggle. Men and women like Yusuf and Prakash, Ruth Slovo, Dulcie September, Vuyisile Mini, Solomon Mahlangu, Caleb Mayekiso, Steve Biko, Jeanette Schoon and her little daughter Katryn, Professor David Webster, Ahmed Timol, Looksmart Ngudle, Neil Aggett, Babla, Rick Turner, Imam Haroon, John Harris and many others. We dare not allow their ultimate sacrifice to go unrecorded.

Ahmed Kathrada
28 November 2009

Introduction

Men of Dynamite tells the story of the band of mainly young Indian men who lived in the vicinity of Fordsburg, Fietas and surrounding areas that were drawn into the armed struggle in the early 1960s. They were amongst the earliest and most resolute recruits to this new mode of resistance. Some were drawn into underground and sabotage units of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and shortly thereafter into Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) when it was launched on 16 December 1961.

They were active in carrying out many acts of sabotage in the early days of the armed struggle and many paid dearly for their involvement. The phenomenon begged some key questions: Who were these individuals? What was the context? What motivated them? What roles did they play? What were the risks, costs and sacrifices? The answers to these questions are diverse and interesting and provide one of the main motivations for writing this book.

The other motivation for this book is more direct and personal. It emanates from hearing the many stories, recollections and reminiscences of veterans of the liberation movement drawn from the Johannesburg Indian community.

From the early 1980s, many of us heard Isu Chiba, Reggie Vandeyar and Shirish Nanabhai relating their experiences as MK cadres and as prisoners on Robben Island. Stalwarts such as Ameen Cajee and Dr Essop Jassat also spoke about their own involvement, which went back to the 1930s and 1940s respectively. Prema Naidoo and other members of his family uniquely straddled the generations and provided a lot of the “infill”, especially of the repressive 1970s period. The release of Ahmed Kathrada and other Rivonia trialists in 1989 and the return of exiles after 1990 – including Indres Naidoo, Abdulhay Jassat, Mosie Moolla and others – provided a new and rich source of history. As the political conditions eased into the 1990s, and with the advent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), more and interesting new facts came to light in these ongoing and often unstructured conversations.



Men of dynamite collective with Kista Moonsammy, Adulhay Jassat, Reggie Vandeyar and Shirish Nanabhai, Johannesburg, October 2009

The reminiscences accumulated into multiple storylines of community mobilisation, organisation and action; police harassment, banning, detention, torture and arrest; social interaction, community engagement and family life; acts of bravery and feelings of trepidation; the turn to armed struggle; and life in exile or prolonged periods of imprisonment and banning.

Some of these stories have been told. Ahmed Kathrada has been the most prolific and has produced no less than four books, including his *Memoirs*, over the past 20 years. Mac Maharaj collaborated with Padraig O'Malley on *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa*. Indres Naidoo's book *Island in Chains: Ten years on Robben Island by Prisoner 885/63* mainly covers his experiences on the Island.

There are, of course, an infinite number of narratives. But the story of the network of mainly young Indian men from Johannesburg and surrounding areas in sabotage units in the early 1960s has not been recorded sufficiently. The individual stories of the main protagonists (except Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada and Mac Maharaj) – Fatima "Fati" Adam, Ameen "Doha" Cajee, Laloo "Isu" Chiba, Magan Narsee Chhiba, Yusuf Isaacs (also known as Yusuf Asvat), Narendra "Nanoo" Jasmath, Adulhay Jassat, Wolfie Kodesh, Kista Moonsammy, Wilton Mkwai, Indres Naidoo, Shirish Nanabhai, Fakar Salie, Reggie Vandeyar, Solly Vania, Bobby Vassen and Tommy Vassen – have hardly been heard in the public domain. These individuals did not act in isolation. People like Dr Essop Jassat, Ahmed Essop "Quarter" Khota, Peter Moonsammy (also known as Peter Joseph), Moosa "Mosie" Moola and Suliman "Babla" Saloojee were an integral part of their legal, social and political support networks.

We are profoundly aware that memories fade as time marches on and that many of our protagonists are in their late sixties or seventies. So it is critical that the stories be recorded and told while most remain in moderate to good health. Men of Dynamite has thus been written to record these remarkable stories and to honour the lives of individuals who have made an inestimable contribution to the struggle against apartheid. This we hope will inspire others to undertake similar initiatives to record the lives of all our heroes and heroines so that we ensure that their stories live forever and eternally secure a legacy for them and their families.

From the outset, this was a collaborative effort. Indeed, without the hard work and effort of a number of key players, this project would not have got off the ground.

The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation – including “Kathy” himself – not only endorsed the idea of this book, it readily accepted the idea as part of its programme to celebrate Comrade Kathy’s 80th birthday. This was critical because it gave us a tight deadline, provided an institutional home and brought its considerable support to get the book to print.

Lesley Hudson of Cut 2 Black Media was an early and passionate supporter of the project. Her company, which she jointly owns with Faizel Cook, generously provided intellectual, copywriting, administrative, logistical and design support. Taryn Mackay and Lerato Motale Makgobatlou, in particular, assisted in conducting many of the interviews and writing several pen portraits. The creativity of the design team – Robyn Jeevanantham, Fikile Ntshumayelo, Sarel Mokheithi and Chesway Slabbert – left us with an aesthetically pleasing product.

Prema Naidoo and Shabir Ballim were indispensable members of the team who were always willing to help in anyway they could: providing transport, interviewing, writing, editing, jogging memories and filling in the gaps. In the background, Kamala Naidoo fully supported her itinerant husband.

Shaheda Seedat-Patel of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation hosted a number of the interviews; and provided logistical support. Shan Balton, the foundation’s CEO, was instrumental in making the project happen at all levels.

Our profound gratitude is due to Isu Chiba who was one of the main sources of our inspiration and central to the conceptualisation and implementation of the project. Yusuf Isaacs, Abdulhay Jassat, Mac Maharaj, Kista Moonsamy, Indres Naidoo, Shirish Nanabhai, Faker Salie, Reggie Vandeyar, Bobby Vassen and Tommy Vassen provided intellectual and political guidance, graciously made their time available for interviews, dredged up pictures and memorabilia, and in some instances, wrote up their own profiles.

The support of the families of Ameen Cajee, Magan Narsee Chhiba and Nanoo Jasmath was critical for the project; in particular, Djamilla Cajee and Iqbal Cajee, Mrs Jaimati Narsee Chhiba and Gabriele “Gabi” Blankenburg. We also thank Nafissa and Khalik Mayet, Roshnee Moonsammy and Hassen Lorgat and Mrs Rookie Vally for assistance on Quarter Khota, Peter Moonsammy and Babla Saloojee respectively. Dr Essop Jassat made himself available for an interview at short notice. Mosie Moolla very ably contributed to his own story.

We thank the families of our participants for enthusiastically contributing their treasured personal photographs. Mrs Ramnie Dinat parted with some valuable family pictures and memorabilia. Linda Chernis from Museum Africa, Graham Goddard from Mayibuye Centre, Bongsi Maswanganyi, from Bailey’s African History Archive and Lucia Raadschelder from the Nelson Mandela Foundation also provided some of the stunning photographs that are displayed in the book. Kadir Saloojee and Yunus Chamda kindly allowed us use of their personal photographs.

At short notice, we were able to mobilise Yunus Momoniat to assist in editing the book. Omar Badsha, the CEO South African History Online, made many valuable suggestions that we have incorporated, as had Eric Itzkin of the City of Johannesburg. Lael Bethlehem and Tasneem Carrim and Fazila Malherbe for kindly checking the manuscript for errors. Thank you to Maya Sooka for her Hindi translations.

We also thank members of our own family – especially Fazela Mahomed for taking care of Zain and Nazneen during deadline – for their unstinting support.

A disclaimer is essential here. This book is not a definitive account of the individuals and events that are profiled here. It heavily relies on the memories of individuals, and while care had been taken to check the stories, it was not within the scope of this project to fully corroborate every recollection. This is a popular account and it is likely that with comprehensive research, others may well come to very different interpretations and conclusions that we have come to. However, the final responsibility for errors and omissions, remains our own.

Rashid Seedat and Razia Saleh
Johannesburg
December 2009

Background¹



Dr Dadoo addressing a rally at Red Square, Fordsburg

The radicalisation of the Indian community by the late 1950s was shaped by the convergence of their socio-economic conditions, racially discriminatory policies imposed by successive governments and the tradition of resistance pioneered by Mahatma Gandhi and re-ignited by the Congress movement during the 1940s and 1950s.

This radicalised community generated many cadres who were prepared to continue the fight against apartheid and eschew non-violence when all the avenues for non-violent protest were effectively closed.

This chapter provides the context and background that witnessed the emergence of the "Men of Dynamite". We first examine Indians in Johannesburg in the early years from a spatial, demographic and socio-economic point of view. We then proceed to provide an historical overview of the community, with an emphasis on the politics of resistance. This macro picture helps us to understand the emergence of the turn to armed struggle and the involvement of our principal protagonists.

Indians in Johannesburg in the early years

The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 established Johannesburg at the centre of the largest and richest gold field ever discovered (Mandy 1984:xv). In 1880, the land on which the city stands was bare veld with a few Boer farmhouses and African homesteads. By 1897, just 11 years later, it had a population of 42 533 Africans, 1 807 Indians and Chinese, 2 879 people of “mixed race” and 50 907 whites (Carr 1990:11). It had become the largest city in South Africa.

The spatial structure of the city began to take root. The reef mining-belt bisected the city and indeed, most of the Witwatersrand. Industrial development was clustered on the mining belt, while trade and commerce were based mainly in the central business district.

The rich moved to Saratoga Avenue in Doornfontein and then to Parktown; the white middle class went north and east to Braamfontein, Hillbrow, Yeoville and Bellevue; poor whites were given land in Vrededorp; and others (mainly blacks) lived on the swampy ground west of Market Square (Mandy 1984:13).

In 1904, using an outbreak of bubonic plague as its rationale, the Johannesburg City Council established a new African location at Klipspruit, 13km from the city centre, in present day Soweto (Bonner and Segal 1998:13). The next major initiative for African housing came in 1918 when the Council established the Western Native Township (Mandy 1984:174), while other Africans lived in the slums of Prospect Township, Sophiatown and Newclare. In 1931, the new African township of Orlando was constructed, leading over time to

the development of a series of townships that eventually became Soweto.

According to Randall and Desai (1967:1), President Kruger of the Boer South African Republic (Transvaal) set aside a “Coolie² Location” as a residential area for Indians, located on the site of the present day Vrededorp and Pageview (Fietas). “By 1896 about half of the Asian population were living [there] and the Brickfields (Burghersdorp), with the rest distributed throughout the central portions of the town and Fordsburg ... [and] Ferreirastown, Marshalltown west of Sauer Street, and the western part of Braamfontein. ... There were substantial numbers of Indians living in City and Suburban, eastern Braamfontein and the city centre.”

The Indian population of Johannesburg grew slowly from 5 384 in 1904 to 6 214 in 1921, with the numbers made up as follows: Fordsburg (216), Burghersdorp (620), Ferreirastown (251), Marshalltown and City and Suburban (88), Johannesburg (444), Vrededorp (55), Braamfontein (2), Doornfontein (1) and 1 682 Indians living in Malay Location. The old Coolie Location was cleared in 1904 (Randall and Desai 1967:8).

Indians continued living in these areas for much of the twentieth century. The Group Areas Act of 1950 led to the declaration of Lenasia as the Indian group area for Johannesburg (whereas Pageview was declared white in 1956). By 1960, only a relatively small number of people moved to Lenasia and most of the Indian inhabitants of the city still lived mainly in the suburbs just west of the city centre.

Between 1904 and 1960, the Indian³ population relative to the total increased from 2,4% to 3% (Brijlal 1989:25-29). In 1960, there were 477 125 Indians in South Africa. By that time, only 5,5% of the community were not born in South Africa.

There were some 64 000 Indians – made up of 33 000 males and 31 000 females – living in the Transvaal in 1960. At the time (and up to the present) the vast majority lived in Natal, which had a population of 395 000 out of the total South African Indian population of 477 125 (Brijlal 1989:30). The population of Indians in Johannesburg in 1960 totalled 28 993 (6,1%), compared to Pretoria with a population of 8 046 (1,7%) and Durban, which had a population of 236 477 (49,6%) (Arkin 1989:57).

English has emerged as the main home language in the Indian community. Use of English increased from 6,33% to 31,79% between 1951 and 1970, while Tamil declined from 32,78% to 24,37% and Gujarati declined from 10,77% to 7,3% in the same period (Brijlal 1989:35).

The religious profile of the Indian community in SA in 1960 was Hindu (68,6%), Islam (20,7%), Christianity (7,5%) and other (3,2%); and in 1980 there were 468 300 Hindus and 90 984 Muslims in Natal and 33 404 Hindus and 66 808 Muslims in the Transvaal. It is worth noting that Hindus made up just 2,1% and Muslims 1,2% of the South African population as a whole (Pillay, Naidoo and Dangor 1989:145-153).

Official statistics point to the fact that the level of educational attainment up to 1960 was particularly low within the Indian community (Arkin 1989:58-60). In 1960, most Indians were employed in manufacturing, commerce and services sectors; and the 1960 percentage distribution of occupations of Indians by sex are tabulated as follows (Arkin 1989:60-62):

	Male	Female
Professional, technical	3,9%	13,3%
Administrative, executive	2,3%	1,2%
Clerical worker	7,9%	4,6%
Sales worker	21,8%	15,6%
Farmer, fisherman	10,9%	9,0%
Miner, quarryman	--	--
Transport worker	7,5%	0,2%
Craftsman, production worker	33,6%	29,7%
Service worker	12,1%	26,3%
No occupation stated and workers not elsewhere classifiable	--	--

Percentage distribution by occupations of Indians by sex, 1960 (Source: Arkin 1989:60-62)

The profile in the Transvaal, one can safely assume, was different in a few respects. The proportion of farmer/fisherman would have been negligible and craftsman/production worker would have been lower than the aggregate. Consequently, the proportions for clerical worker and service worker would have been significantly higher.

Historical overview

The cumulative experiences over a period of 100 years profoundly shaped the political consciousness of the Indian community in South Africa. The experiences recalled here will aid our understanding of the conditions that led to the armed struggle and the involvement of this dedicated band

of young Indian men from a few western suburbs of the city of Johannesburg.

It is not well known that some Indians first arrived in South Africa in the seventeenth century. The Dutch brought Indian



Between 1860 and 1911, 152 184 indentured labourers from India arrived in Natal

slaves from the subcontinent to the Cape, which they ruled as a colony from 1652. "From then [1653] until late eighteenth century when the import of slaves from Asia was prohibited, many...persons from India – mainly Bengal, Coromandel Coast and Kerala – were taken to the Cape and sold into slavery." (Reddy 2009) The slaves were brought to work on the farms or to do domestic work and were eventually absorbed into the nascent Coloured population, thereby erasing their ethnic origins.

The arrival of significant numbers of Indians in South Africa occurred in 1860, when indentured immigrants arrived in the British Colony of Natal to work on the sugarcane plantations, which were well suited to the subtropical coastal lowlands of the colony. At this time, the territory of present day South Africa was divided between the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the British colonies of the Cape and Natal.

According to Fatima Meer (1969:10) the first group of 342 indentured immigrants, including 75 women and 83 children, comprising mainly Hindus and a small number of Christians and Muslims from south India, arrived on 16 November 1860 on board the SS Truro, which departed from the port of Madras. Ten days later, on 26 November 1860, another 351 indentured labourers, including 61 women and 83 children, travelled aboard the SS Belvedere from the port of Calcutta.

A total of 152 184 indentured immigrants, aboard 384 ships, were brought to Natal between 1860 and 1911. Of these, 101 468 people came from southern India (the Madras Presidency, Mysore and surrounding areas), while the rest came from the northern and northeastern areas of India (the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and Bihar in the

Bengal Presidency). They comprised 62% men, 25% women and 13% children; and the majority were Hindu, 2% were Christian and less than 12% Muslim (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000:10).

"Indenture" is a labour contract for a specified period, after which the person under contract is "free" to return to his or her homeland or elect to remain in the country. "The demand for indentured labour arose from the need of white farmers who were experimenting with sugar production for a secure supply of labour. This the local African population would not provide, since the hold of their subsistence economy had not been broken. Farmers found that African workers were content to work for short periods after which they returned to their homes." (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000:10)

Independent immigrants (also known as "passenger Indians") came to SA at their own cost to pursue economic activity of their own choosing. They were mainly Muslims from Gujarat, but were; later joined by Hindu Gujaratis, Urdu-speaking Muslims from the United Province, and a few Marathi-speaking Konkani Muslims (Pahad 1972:15).

The Natal government originally requested Indian labour in the colony on the basis of fair and equal treatment after completion of the indenture. Over time, as the immigrants freed themselves from their contractual obligations, they began to economically compete with the White population of Natal. "In the end it was not what Indians looked like or their customs which determined relations and policies. White traders, farmers and workers focused on the Indians as significant competitors." (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000:16) This led to anti-Indian agitation on a significant scale in Natal and, later, in the Transvaal.

When Natal was granted “responsible government” in 1893, it enacted a number of laws that curtailed the rights of Indians with respect to the franchise and the entry of free Indians, and it imposed a £3 tax, which was designed to compel free Indians to return to India.

Indians first entered the Transvaal in 1881, but after the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, significant numbers of free and passenger Indians moved to the territory. Discriminatory laws were also imposed on Indians in the Transvaal from 1885 onwards, including restrictions on trade, residence and occupation, and ownership of property (Pahad 1972:16).

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi⁴ arrived in South Africa in 1893 to act for a merchant client in a case against another Indian merchant. He was quickly sensitised to escalating anti-Indian agitation, treatment meted out to Indians and the increasing number of discriminatory laws imposed by the governments of the British colonies and the Boer republics. He experienced racial discrimination at first hand when he was famously thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg because he refused to leave the whites-only first class compartment.



Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi with an inscription by Gandhi to Thambi Naidoo in 1909

This led him to organise and mobilise resistance against the colonial and republican governments. He established the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) on 22 August 1894 and later formed the Transvaal British Indian Association in 1903. In the early days, the resistance was dominated by wealthy Indian merchants who sought to address their major concerns by appealing to the (British) imperial doctrine of equality (Bhana 1996a:1).

Reddy (2009a) describes Gandhi's experiences in SA, including the development of his philosophy of satyagraha, as follows:

Not only had he [Gandhi] spent twenty-one years of his adult life in South Africa, but he had served four of his ten terms of imprisonment in that country – in the prisons of Johannesburg, Volksrust and Dundee. It was in South Africa that he developed his philosophy of satyagraha. ... Gandhiji found that 'passive resistance' was seen even by European friends as a 'weapon of the weak.' He sought a term which could be understood by Indians and make it clear that the resistance was out of moral strength rather than any weakness. He invited suggestions and, in November 1907, invented the term 'satyagraha' (firmness in truth). The choice of the term itself appears to have helped crystallise his thinking.

In the Transvaal, he opposed the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907 (the Black Act) that required the registration of all "Asiatics". Satyagraha was launched in July 1907 when volunteers picketed registration offices and most of the community refused registration under the Act. In 1913,

satyagraha was employed to oppose the £3 tax and other discriminatory laws. Gandhi achieved mass support for the last phase of the satyagraha campaign (1913-1914), which was supported by poor and middle class Indians (Bhana 1997:100).

Thousands of resisters went to jail. This was Gandhi's legacy to future generations of resisters in South Africa, breaking the fear of imprisonment. Several families that participated in this resistance campaign would produce the resisters of later years who opposed apartheid laws, which clearly promoted injustice (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000:22).

In 1913 thousands of Indian coal miners went on strike in Newcastle and a large number of these took part in the march from Newcastle to Volksrust, in order to deliberately defy the law that required Indians to carry permits to cross from one province to another. It was the core group from these marchers who were the original founders of Tolstoy farm.

Sustained pressure led to the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement, whereby Gandhi agreed to suspend satyagraha in exchange for abolition of the £3 tax, recognition of Indian customary marriage and admission of wives and children domiciled in South Africa. However, restrictions on Indians in the Orange Free State and the Cape remained in place. Gandhi eventually left South Africa permanently in 1914.

The Transvaal Asiatic Land and Trading Amendment Act, promulgated in 1919, placed severe restrictions on the issuing

of new trading licences and the ownership of fixed property. This was followed by the Class Areas Bill of 1924, which sought to segregate Indians residentially and commercially, but which did not succeed due to the electoral defeat of the South Africa Party. However, the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provisions) Bill, which sought to both segregate and to substantially reduce the number of Indians in the country through repatriation was initiated a year later.

The essence of the solution proposed by the Union government on the “Indian question” lay in voluntary repatriation or emigration to another British colony. This met with widespread concern by the local community, which was already into its second generation. The intervention of the Government of India was sought and a Round Table Conference was held in 1926-27. This resulted in the Cape Town Agreement of 1927, which formally introduced the mediatory role of the Government of India with regard to South Africans of Indian origin and the appointment of a diplomatic representative – called “agent”, later “agent-general” and finally “high commissioner”: Bhana (1997:101) is of the view that the diplomatic representatives added confusion to the political scene because “he could not be seen to be actively promoting the cause of South Africa’s Indians; and on the other hand, he had to moderate their interests for the sake of British dominion harmony ... In a situation of such ambivalence, his role often created dissension among the Indians.”

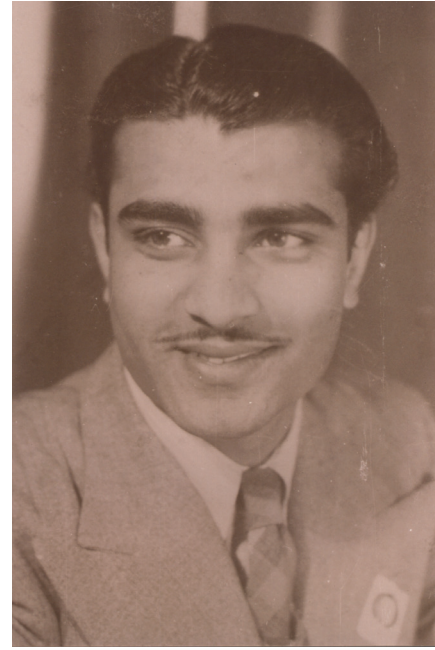
Anti-Indian agitation increased in the 1930s. By the early 1940s, Jan Smuts enacted the Occupation of Land Restrictions Act of 1943 (also known as the Pegging Act). The new law required government approval for all new land and property transactions between Indians and Whites.

The South African Indian Congress (SAIC) was formed in 1919 at the initiative of the Cape British Indian Council to oppose discriminatory laws. It also comprised the NIC and the TBIA, which was later replaced by the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC), formed in 1927. However, its moderate leadership was “basically defensive and dependent of the goodwill of the Indian and South African Governments.” (Pahad 1972:7)

But, a new politics was brewing. In Natal, members of the Anti-Segregation Council (ASC) mounted a successful challenge for leadership of the NIC in 1945, where they were elected before a crowd of 7 000 supporters. Dr GM “Monty” Naicker was elected president of the NIC, a position he held until 1961 (Bhana 1997:102). Leading members of the NIC included HA Naidoo and MP Naicker, who were trade unionists; attorneys JN Singh and IC Meer who studied at Wits along with Nelson Mandela; and members of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) such as Debi Singh and Dawood Seedat.

A similar story played itself out in the Transvaal, where Dr Yusuf Dadoo took control of the TIC. Dadoo, who joined the CPSA in 1939, emerged as one of the most important figures in resistance politics in South African history. Among the leaders of the TIC were the trade unionist TN Naidoo, whose father Thambi Naidoo was one of Gandhi’s closest associates in SA; brothers Molvi Ismail Cachalia and Yusuf Cachalia, whose father was also close to Gandhi during the days of satyagraha; and Nana Sita, a staunch Gandhian who later became a symbol of resistance to the Group Areas Act.

The radicals in both provinces comprised of individuals who were drawn from the professions, the trade unions, the merchant class, Gandhians and members of the Communist



NIC leading members IC Meer and JN Singh

Party of South Africa. They differed from the conservatives in several respects. They eschewed moderate politics in favour of direct, militant mass action; they were concerned with the position of the Indian working class, especially through their strong connection with the trade union movement; they were inspired by anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles across the world, not least the struggle for independence in India led by the Indian National Congress; and they were committed to the principle of non-racialism and unity of all the oppressed people.

After World War II, the “numbers of [Indian] South African-born predominated and youthful third-generation Indians were ready to claim their South African heritage as a right”, coupled with a sizable population of 250 000, of whom 210 000 were in Natal, 30 000 in the Transvaal and 10 000 in the Cape (Bhana 1997:103).

When the Pegging Act expired in 1946, the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, named the “Ghetto Act”, was passed. The law provided for compulsory residential and trade segregation in exchange for indirect representation in parliament and the provincial legislatures.

This set the stage for the launch of the Passive Resistance Campaign on 13 June 1946, by the Joint Passive Resistance Council (which comprised the TIC, the NIC and the Cape Indian Assembly). Two thousand volunteers courted arrest by illegally occupying land prohibited in terms of the Ghetto Act and illegally crossing provincial boundaries (Indians were required to have a permit to cross provincial boundaries).

This campaign lasted for two years and was very significant because it revived the militant, non-violent mass action pioneered by Gandhi a few decades before.

In 1948, the NIC and the TIC took control of the SAIC from the old conservative leadership.

In keeping with the non-racial approach of the radicals in the Indian Congresses, the Joint Declaration of Cooperation or the "Doctors' Pact" was signed on 27 March 1947 by Dr AB Xuma of the ANC, Dr Naicker of the NIC and Dr Dadoo of the TIC, wherein they pledged joint cooperation between Indian and African in a united struggle for common objectives.

For its part, the leadership of the ANC was highly impressed by the militant but non-violent action of the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign, conducted jointly by the TIC and NIC.

It was this pact that partly inspired the adoption by the ANC of the 1949 Programme of Action on the basis of militant but non-violent opposition to repression.

The South African Native National Congress, later to become the African National Congress (ANC), was formed on 8 January 1912 in Bloemfontein shortly after the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The National Convention of 1908 that followed the South African War (also known as the Anglo-Boer War) agreed to the establishment of a union that amalgamated the Boer republics and British colonies into a unitary entity within the British Commonwealth. However, the



TIC elections held on Natalspruit Sport Ground in 1946

deal denied the indigenous African majority basic democratic rights. Instead, the idea was that African people should be confined to the 13% of land in the reserves, where they were expected to agree on their own “self-determination” in what were essentially crowded ethnic enclaves.

At its inception, the ANC sought to unite the African people across tribal and ethnic lines to press for their political rights within the union. In its early years, the organisation’s approach was basically non-confrontational, where the modus operandi was to send deputations to London to put pressure on the British government, as the colonial power, to intercede on behalf of African people.

The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), under the leadership of Clements Kadalie, was formed in 1919 and rose to become one of the most active and militant organisations of the 1920s. It could not sustain itself and collapsed by the late 1920s. The Communist Party of South Africa was established in 1921 as a workers’ party. With a majority African membership, it subsequently emerged as one of the most significant non-racial organisations of the first half of the twentieth century. The Non-European United Front, formed in the 1930s aimed at fostering unity of the oppressed people of South Africa.

Josiah Gumede was elected President of the ANC in 1927. He sought to transform the ANC into a militant, mass organisation but was thwarted by the conservatives who voted him out in 1930. As a result the ANC remained a moderate organisation until after the Second World War. After the African mineworkers’ strike of 1946, led by JB Marks, a member of the CPSA, the political climate began to change.

The National Party (NP or “Nats”) came to power in 1948 when it promised the Whites-only electorate that it would vigorously implement apartheid, which sought to entrench racial separation. A number of new laws were thus passed in subsequent years: the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act, the Bantu Education Act and the Suppression of Communism Act.

The Nats also promised to escalate state repression. In 1949, meetings organised by the Communist Party MP Sam Kahn were banned in the Transvaal under the Riotous Assemblies Act; restrictions were placed on Dr Dadoo; passports were refused to activists; and publications were censored by decrees in the Government Gazette (ANC 2003:5).

The political climate changed dramatically after the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) – with luminaries such as Anton Lembede, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, and Walter Sisulu in its leadership – proposed a militant Programme of Action at the ANC conference in 1949, where Sisulu became Secretary-General of the ANC. As has already been stated, the new course for the ANC was partly influenced by the success of the Indian Congresses during the Passive Resistance Campaign.

Racist and repressive laws and practices saw increasing militancy on the part of the ANC and its allies. A Defend Free Speech Convention held in Johannesburg on 26 March 1950 with the participation of the ANC, the SAIC, the African People’s Organisation (APO) and the CPSA called for a general strike on May Day 1950, the call was limited to the Transvaal. Police opened fire on demonstrators killing 18 people – 17 in Alexandra and 1 in Benoni. In response, the leadership of the ANC and SAIC held an emergency meeting and declared 26 June 1950 as a national day of protest and mourning.

The 1950 events precipitated the most organised, visionary and sustained period of resistance hitherto seen in South African history.

The 1950s saw a surfeit of leaders emerging in the Congresses. Chief Albert Luthuli, a devout Christian and a hereditary chief, replaced Dr Moroka as president of the ANC. He was president of the Natal ANC before he replaced Moroka. Leading members of the Communist Party in the leadership of the ANC included Moses Kotane and JB Marks. Other leading figures included Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela.

Contemporaries of Dr Dadoo and Dr Naicker in the 1940s included Molvi Cachalia, Yusuf Cachalia, Ismail Meer, JN Singh, Debi Singh, Dawood Seedat, Ashwin Choudree, DU Mistry, TN Naidoo, Molvi Saloojee, SM Mayet, George Singh and MP Naicker.

The formation of the Congress of Democrats (COD) was inspired by the Defiance Campaign. Its leading figures were former members of the Communist Party of South Africa, which was banned in 1950, such as Joe Slovo, Ruth First and Bram Fischer and members of the Springbok Legion such as Jack Hodgson and Rusty Bernstein.

The campaigns of the 1950s were visionary, widespread and militant, and they sought to challenge the legitimacy of the apartheid state. In 1952, the Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws or “Defiance Campaign” was launched to challenge unjust laws. It saw 8 000 people of all races courting arrest in defiance of these laws.

The Defiance Campaign was the very first joint campaign of the ANC and SAIC on a national scale. Nelson Mandela

was the National Volunteer-in-Chief, and Molvi Cachalia, his Deputy. It was the first time that African and Indian men and women jointly defied and were imprisoned. There were also a few white defiers.

The formations along racial lines – ANC, SAIC, Coloured People’s Congress, and the mainly white Congress of Democrats – along with the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) coalesced into the Congress Alliance in the mid-1950s. This signalled non-racialism in action on a significant scale. Moreover, the constituent bodies of the alliance were broadly united in policy, practice and action.

The Freedom Charter, adopted at the Congress of the People on 25-26 June 1955, was the product of the Campaign for the Congress of the People. This was an extensive campaign that covered every corner of the country, where people were asked to put forward their vision for a free, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. It evoked a massive popular response, where people of all races, classes and ethnicities responded positively. The Freedom Charter was hugely influential and provided the inspiration for the Constitution of democratic South Africa, adopted in 1996. Several other campaigns captured the imagination of the oppressed people of South Africa including the Women’s March of 1956, the potato boycott against slave-like conditions on potato farms, the Alexandra bus boycott and the campaign against Bantu education.

The campaigns of the Congress Alliance led to the emergence of a mass movement. Membership increased dramatically and popular participation in the activities of the organisations reached unprecedented levels during that period.



On the roof of Kholvad House L-R: Yusuf Cachalia (SAIC), D U Mistry (SAIC), Dan Tloome (SACTUI/ANC), Goolam Pahad (SAIC), O R Tambo (ANC), David Bopape, (Tvl ANC), Molvi I Cachalia (SAIC), 1953

As the tempo of resistance increased during the 1950s, the apartheid government responded equably. It tightened repressive legislation, banned and harassed leading activists and resorted to the use of force in some public demonstrations. In 1956, 156 people were arrested and charged with treason. After an initial process, charges were dropped against most of the accused except 30 key leaders of the movement, including Chief Luthuli, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Ahmed Kathrada. Although they were eventually acquitted in 1961, five years after the initial charges were levelled, the trial consumed the time and energy of key leaders and came at huge personal cost to these individuals.

The PAC broke away on two main points. They did not accept

the Freedom Charter; especially that South Africa belonged to all its people – black and white. They did not believe in co-operation with Indians, whites and coloureds. And they were anti-communist, and regarded the Freedom Charter as a communist document.

The PAC embarked on an Anti-Pass Campaign in 1960 that precipitated the events in Sharpeville on 21 March 1960, when the police killed 69 people and wounded 186. A general strike called on 28 March brought the country to a standstill. On 30 March, the government declared a State of Emergency and detained more than 2 000 people across the country. On 8 April the ANC and the PAC were banned in terms of the newly legislated Unlawful Organisations Act.



March prior to the infamous Sharpeville massacre, 1960

Story of the “Men of Dynamite”⁵

The dramatic events of 1960 constituted a rupture. The regime decided that the answer to escalating resistance was harsh and unremitting repression. Under these conditions, ANC and SACP national structures operated underground to define their response to the tightening conditions. This set the scene for the turn to armed struggle and the emergence of the “Men of Dynamite”, a band of mostly young Indian men who operated as clandestine saboteurs between 1961 and 1964 in the predominantly Indian suburbs on the western fringes of Johannesburg.

It is clear that the SACP took a formal decision to embark on armed struggle in December 1960, well before the ANC did so, and during the course of 1961, the SACP was already in the process of recruiting cadres, arranging basic training and handling explosives (Magubane et al 2004:82-83). This was probably due to the “capacity and infrastructure [of the SACP] to survive underground for a reasonable period of time.” (Chiba 2008:4)

Ismail Meer, a leading member of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), describes the debates within the SAIC and ANC on the move to armed resistance:

Around August/September 1961, the national executive of the banned ANC met secretly on a farm in Groutville, Natal, under the chairmanship of Chief Albert Luthuli.

On the same night the Indian Congresses met in Tongaat. We were preparing for the issue to be discussed at the joint executives of the Congresses to be held the next evening. ... Finally, we agreed that we would go to the joint meeting with the ANC, as we felt that there was still the possibility of using non-violent methods of struggle, but that we would not stand in the way of the ANC if it decided otherwise.

The joint meeting took place at 8pm at the beach house of the Bodasinghs, near Stanger. The debate continued through the night. Chief Luthuli, the president general of the ANC, presided. He opened the meeting by informing us that the executive of the ANC had met and decided to allow the formation of an organisation that would engage in violent forms of struggle...

Nelson Mandela was unrelenting in championing the turn to violence. As dawn crept on us, we wrapped up the debate and endorsed the decision that the ANC had taken the night before. We had placed an enormous responsibility on Nelson Mandela. Our decision led to the birth of Umkhonto we Sizwe, which announced its existence in the midst of explosions that rocked South Africa on 16 December 1961. (Meer 2002:224)

A leaflet issued by the "command of Umkhonto we Sizwe" on 16 December 1961, the day of its formation, stated:

Units of Umkhonto we Sizwe today carried out planned attacks against Government installations, particularly those concerned with the policy of apartheid and race discrimination.

Umkhonto we Sizwe is a new, independent body, formed by Africans. It includes in its ranks South Africans of all races. ... [It] will carry on the struggle for freedom and democracy by new methods, which are necessary to complement the actions of the established national liberation organizations. ... [It] supports the national liberation movement, and our members, jointly and individually, place themselves under the overall political guidance of that movement.



Mosie Moolla and Nelson Mandela in the early 1960s

It is, however, well known that the main national liberation organizations in this country have consistently followed a policy of non-violence. They have conducted themselves peaceably at all times, regardless of Government attacks and persecutions upon them, and despite all Government-inspired attempts to provoke violence. They have done so because the people prefer peaceful methods of change to achieve their aspirations without the suffering and bitterness of civil war. But the people's patience is not endless.

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom. (Karis and Carter 1977:716-7)

The leaflet (also referred to as MK's manifesto) is an important text for a number of reasons. It set out the rationale for MK's formation. It argued that the liberation movement had long pursued a policy of non-violence. The reaction on the part of state was a "policy of force, repression and violence [which] will no longer be met with non-violent resistance only". This meant that existing modes of resistance would be broadened to include the armed struggle.

The leaflet was unambiguous in pointing out that MK operated under the political guidance of the liberation movement, meaning the leadership of the ANC, in order to distinguish itself from purely militaristic organisations.

The leaflet hinted that MK's mode of armed resistance at the time would take the form of sabotage. "At first, MK confined its operations to acts of sabotage: forays against military installations, power plants, transportation links, and telephone lines. Sabotage was chosen because initially MK was not equipped to engage in other forms of violence and because such activities did not involve loss of life." (O' Malley 2007:88) This differed from other modes such as insurrection,

guerrilla warfare or full-scale civil war. There is some debate about the document entitled "Operation Mayibuye", which was found by police during the Rivonia arrests. It argued for a switch to guerrilla warfare and was presented as evidence at the trial. However, Walter Sisulu refuted the contention that it set out the policy of MK.

Laloo Chiba (2008:4) states that in his view, "... it had never been the objective of the Liberation Movement to bring the repressive apartheid State to its knees by defeating it militarily ... [since it] had the most sophisticated and powerful military machine on the African continent, such an objective would have been unrealisable in the first place. Rather, the purpose of the armed struggle was to apply further pressure on the Government, in conjunction with other pillars of the National Democratic Revolution, with the view to forcing it to the negotiating table."

MK's membership was open to all races. Laloo Chiba (2008:3) said that in the three major trials of 1964 – the trial of the 18 in Durban at the beginning of 1964, the Rivonia Trial concluded in mid-1964 and the Little Rivonia Trial in December 1964 - more than 40% of those convicted and sentenced came from "minority population groups". This marked a major departure from the racially based organisational structures of the Congress Alliance. MK's non-racial membership was an important reason for the ANC to formally open its membership to all races after the 1969 Morogoro conference.

Umkhonto we Sizwe Manifesto

Leaflet issued by Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) on 16 December 1961

Units of Umkhonto we Sizwe today carried out planned attacks against Government installations, particularly those connected with the policy of apartheid and race discrimination.

Umkhonto we Sizwe is a new, independent body, formed by Africans. It includes in its ranks South Africans of all races. It is not connected in any way with a so-called "Committee for National Liberation" whose existence has been announced in the press. Umkhonto we Sizwe will carry on the struggle for freedom and democracy by new methods, which are necessary to complement the actions of the established national liberation organizations. Umkhonto we Sizwe fully supports the national liberation movement, and our members jointly and individually, place themselves under the overall political guidance of that movement.

It is, however, well known that the main national liberation organizations in this country have consistently followed a policy of non-violence. They have conducted themselves peaceably at all times, regardless of Government attacks and persecutions upon them, and despite all Government-inspired attempts to provoke them to violence. They have done so because the people prefer peaceful methods of change to achieve their aspirations without the suffering and bitterness of civil war. But the people's patience is not endless.

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom.

The Government has interpreted the peacefulness of the movement as weakness; the people's non-violent policies have been taken as a green light for Government violence. Refusal to resort to force has been interpreted by the Government as an invitation to use armed force against the people without any fear of reprisals. The methods of Umkhonto we Sizwe mark a break with that past.

We are striking out along a new road for the liberation of the people of this country. The Government policy of force, repression and violence will no longer be met with non-violent resistance only! The choice is not ours; it has been

made by the Nationalist Government which has rejected every peaceable demand by the people for rights and freedom and answered every such demand with force and yet more force! Twice in the past 18 months, virtual martial law has been imposed in order to beat down peaceful, non-violent strike action of the people in support of their rights. It is now preparing its forces — enlarging and rearming its armed forces and drawing the white civilian population into commandos and pistol clubs — for full-scale military actions against the people. The Nationalist Government has chosen the course of force and massacre, now, deliberately, as it did at Sharpeville.

Umkhonto we Sizwe will be at the front line of the people's defence. It will be the fighting arm of the people against the Government and its policies of race oppression. It will be the striking force of the people for liberty, for rights and for their final liberation! Let the Government, its supporters who put it into power, and those whose passive toleration of reaction keeps it in power, take note of where the Nationalist Government is leading the country!

We of Umkhonto we Sizwe have always sought — as the liberation movement has sought — to achieve liberation, without bloodshed and civil clash. We do so still. We hope — even at this late hour — that our first actions will awaken every one to a realization of the disastrous situation to which the Nationalist policy is leading. We hope that we will bring the Government and its supporters to their senses before it is too late, so that both the Government and its policies can be changed before matters reach the desperate stage of civil war. We believe our actions to be a blow against the Nationalist preparations for civil war and military rule.

In these actions, we are working in the best interests of all the people of this country — black, brown and white — whose future happiness and well-being cannot be attained without the overthrow of the Nationalist Government, the abolition of white supremacy and the winning of liberty, democracy and full national rights and equality for all the people of this country.

We appeal for the support and encouragement of all those South Africans who seek the happiness and freedom of the people of this country.

*Afrika Mayibuye!**

Issued by command of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

**Africa Return!*

Leaflet (manifesto) issued by Umkhonto we Sizwe on the day of its launch on 16 December 1961

Organisation and recruitment

At the apex of Umkhonto we Sizwe was the National High Command, with Nelson Mandela as the Commander-in-Chief. Other members of this structure were Walter Sisulu, Joe Slovo, Govan Mbeki and Raymond Mhlaba. The High Command was responsible for policy, tactics, targets, training and finance.

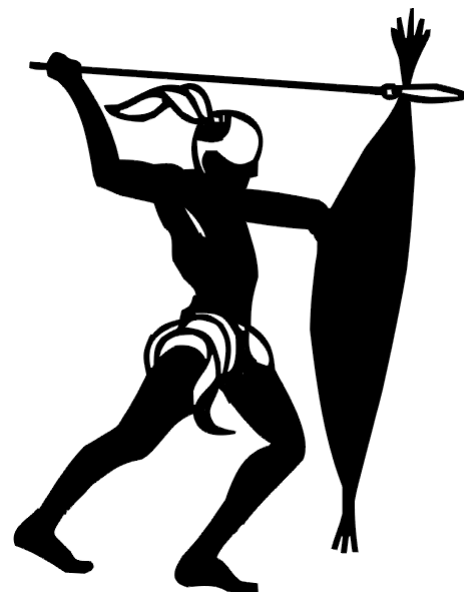
MK sought to build a network of clandestine operatives. The National High Command set up regional commands in different parts of the country: Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Durban. Regional commands were responsible for carrying out acts of sabotage locally. These in turn set up and recruited cadres who would be operationally active at the local level. A division of labour saw different people assigned to various teams responsible for reconnaissance, support, propaganda, ordnance procurement and sabotage. In some instances, recruits were sent overseas for military training.

Members of the Johannesburg (also called the Transvaal) Regional Command comprised Elias Motsoaledi, Patrick Mthembu (who later turned state witness), Jack Hodgson, and Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada, who was a member for a short time. Their initial work involved bringing the former SACP units into MK and arranging training for cadres.

In Natal, members of the Regional Command included MP Naicker, Ronnie Kasrils, Eric Mtshali, Billy Nair and Bruno Mtolo, who later sold out. Solomon Mbanjwa and Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim were later co-opted onto the Regional Command (Magubane et al 2004:108-109).

The composition of the national and regional commands was an important departure from the structure of the Congress Alliance. It comprised people of all races and had strong representation from the Communist Party and, in the case of Natal, the influence of trade unionists (Magubane et al 2004:108). There was, however, a dearth of women in these structures. The lack of women cadres in MK's early history needs further research.

MK was a non-racial organisation, but the rigid racial separation enforced under apartheid meant that most operations were conducted by units organised on a racial basis (Magubane et al 2004:113). In other words, units would easily escape the attention of the police if they were made up of the same racial group. Hence, the emergence of our "Men of Dynamite".



MK logo

Around late 1961 and early 1962, Kathy, who was a member of the Johannesburg Regional Command, recruited his old friend Ameen "Doha" Cajee, who also hailed from the small western Transvaal town of Schweizer-Reneke, and comrades Moosa Moosajee and Abdulhay Jassat into an MK unit. His unit carried out "modest sabotage with the dual purpose of assessing targets and testing the efficacy of our equipment". (Kathrada 2004:142) Kathy recalls that he and Doha, with Dasu as a lookout, placed an incendiary bomb in the Portuguese Labour office on the night of the launch of MK on 16 December 1961.

In 1960, after the lifting of the State of Emergency, Reggie Vandeyar recruited Laloo "Isu" Chiba into an SACP cell, which was part of the party's underground network. In early 1961, Paul Joseph and Wolfie Kodesh, who were party veterans, joined the duo. Led by Wolfie, the foursome constituted one of the SACP's sabotage units shortly after the party decided to engage in this new form of resistance. The unit engaged in rudimentary forms of sabotage that involved the disruption of power supply and telecommunications by sawing pylons and cables.

Some months later, towards the end of 1961, the party sabotage unit was instructed to disband and, with the same members, reconstitute itself as an MK unit. It was the first MK unit to be established in the Indian areas of Johannesburg. At the launch of MK on 16 December 1961, the unit identified, reconnoitred and attacked three targets which were symbols of apartheid. MK's manifesto was distributed throughout the country on the night of its establishment. Doha and Dasu Joseph, Paul's brother, distributed it locally.

Early in 1962, Wolfie was moved out of the unit and reassigned to other duties. His superior in the Regional Command was Jack Hodgson. It was then decided that Isu would replace

Wolfie and that Jack would remain the contact person in the Regional Command. They were instructed that each member of the original unit had to establish a new four-person unit of his own, thereby expanding the original unit into four units each operating with four operatives. This structure of 16 operatives constituted a platoon, and Isu was appointed the platoon commander. He remained in charge of the four units from 1962 until his arrest in April 1963.

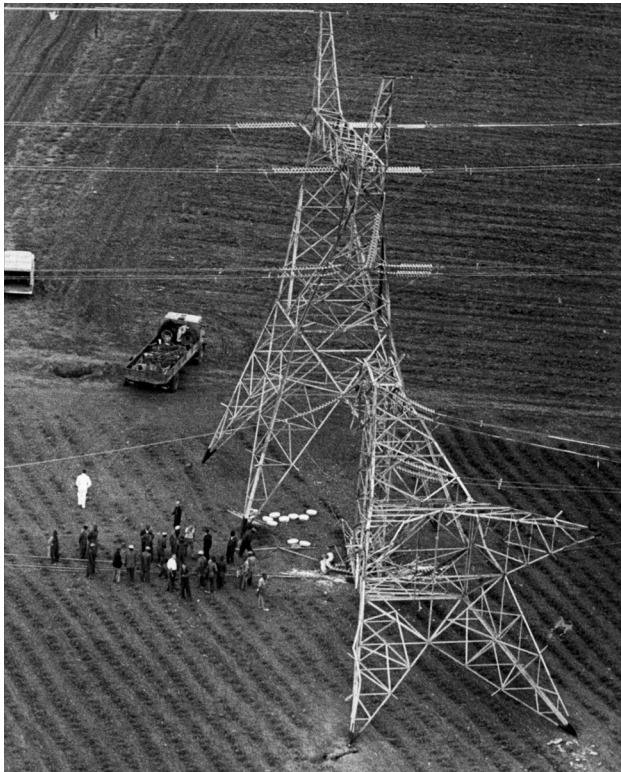
Kathy had then terminated his membership of the Regional Command after discussions with senior comrades. In fact, he continued to do administrative work at Rivonia for the National High Command.

Isu led one unit, whose members were Solly Vania and Faker Salie, both close friends. Presumably, they were recruited because they were implicitly trusted by Isu and, since they did not have any history of direct political involvement, there was little chance that the police would monitor them.

Reggie led another unit. He recruited Indres Naidoo and Shirish Nanabhai⁶. Gammat Jardine, who turned out to be a police agent, then joined them. Indres and Shirish were members of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC). The advantage of using activists as recruits was that they were dedicated and disciplined. In the event of being caught, they would not easily betray their comrades. They would also understand the primacy of politics and strictly adhere to the organisation's strictures regarding loss of life.

Political activists were steeped in the tradition of reading revolutionary literature. At that time, literature about guerrilla struggles in China, Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam was very much in the vogue. Indres Naidoo said: "At the time of my arrest the police found a book published by the Americans which dealt

with guerrilla warfare as espoused by Che Guevara and Mao tse Tung [Mao Zedong], published as a counter insurgency book but very useful to us.” (Naidoo 1986:31).



A fallen pylon the night after MK was launched, 1961

On the other hand, activists who remained involved in legal organisations had a high profile and had to balance their legal and clandestine activities. Naidoo reveals on one occasion he, Shirish and Reggie performed an MK duty, and missed an important political meeting. Although Nanabhai and Vandeyar could make excuses, he couldn't because his mother, brothers and sisters were all at the meeting (Naidoo 1986:31).

The leader of the third unit was Paul. The unit's members were Amien Cajee (not Ameen "Doha" Cajee), Omar Bhamjee and Magan Narsee Chhiba. Each of the new recruits had not previously been politically active, and would in all likelihood avoid police observation. Cajee and Bhamjee were sent for training to Czechoslovakia in August 1962. It appears that they had a fall-out and consequently decided to remain abroad, opting to live in England instead of returning home. Magan was later shifted to a new unit headed by Solly in 1963, and later still into a unit headed by Kista Moonsamy in 1964.

Abdulhay Jassat led the fourth unit. Like Indres and Shirish, Abdulhay was also a leading member of the TIYC. The other three members of the unit were Tommy Vassen, Yusuf Asvat and Moosa Moosajee. Tommy was Bobby's elder brother, and also a friend of Kathy and Isu. Yusuf Isaacs (also known as Yusuf Asvat) was a brother of Dr Zainab Asvat and Amina Asvat (later Cachalia) who were high profile activists with the Transvaal Indian Congress. Asvat himself did not enjoy his sisters' political profile. Moosajee, like Jassat, was part of a unit that was previously led by Kathy.

Solly was instructed to set up a unit of his own, which included Bobby, and Magan, who was transferred from Paul's unit, and Kista Moonsamy.

Nelson Mandela was arrested on 5 August 1962, tried and sentenced to five years' imprisonment for leaving the country illegally and organising a national stayaway. But a bigger blow was still to come. Roughly a year later, on 11 July 1963, almost the entire leadership of MK was arrested at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia.

Wilton Mkwai, who escaped capture at Liliesleaf, then, set up the second National High Command. This structure comprised Wilton, David Kitson, Isu and Lionel Gay. Mac Maharaj was the political commissar to the High Command and John Matthews served on its technical committee. Although Isu had been promoted to the highest structure in a relatively short time, he maintained his links with his units in Johannesburg.

In early 1964, Kista set up a unit of his own, comprising Magan, his comrade in Solly's unit, Joe Cajee and Nanoo Jasmath, who was Shirish Nanabhai's brother.

Ahmed Bhabha, SM Mayet and Fatima "Fati" Adam (later Guman)⁷ were recruited in 1964. They were assigned to assist Lionel Gay and Nanda Naidoo with setting up a broadcast on 26 June 1964 at Shangrila Club in Vereeniging, which was owned by prominent Indian businessmen. The broadcast was to be made by Wilton Mkwai, the leader of the second National High Command at the time, but it failed. Bhabha gave evidence at the Little Rivonia Trial on the failed broadcast, but his evidence was not material in that it did not impact negatively on the conviction and sentence of the accused.

The political commissar to the second National High Command was Mac Maharaj. While studying in London in the late 1950s, he linked up with Vella Pillay, the representative of the Central Committee of the SACP in the UK. Mac was then offered training in the then German Democratic Republic:

In the end, I trained for eleven months: six months in all aspects of training and five months in sabotage – how to use dynamite, blow up pylons, cut railway lines, and manufacture homemade explosives. Then in May 1962 I

returned to South Africa via London. I was the first person to undergo training outside the country after the decision to turn to organized violence as a means of struggle. (O'Malley 2007:90)

Mac was then integrated into a unit of the SACP in mid-1962 that was led by Kathy. The other members were Abdulhay Jassat, Ebrahim Moolla and Solly Essakjee, who dropped out in 1963. Mac was also appointed to a technical committee with three other people in order to set up printing works. Paul and his brothers Peter and Dasu were deeply involved in underground and MK work, and they were vital to Mac's underground work, especially on the propaganda front. Through contact with Ruth First and Wilton Mkwai, Paul was formally integrated into MK. After the Rivonia arrests, Mac was asked to serve as the commissar to the second National High Command. Along with Mkwai, he manufactured bombs for MK units and was involved in bombing railway tracks. He worked closely with Doha Cajee and on one occasion they manufactured gunpowder, which blew up when they tried to dry it by heating it (O' Malley 2007:103-117).

At the beginning of the armed struggle, training was either non-existent or very basic. Arrangements were made with the People's Republic of China for some of the early recruits to be trained there. Among these were Wilton Mkwai, Joe Gqabi, Andrew Mlangeni, Nanda Naidoo (whose *nom de guerre* was Steve Naidoo) and Patrick Mthembu. Others were later sent to Algeria, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

Isu Chiba (2008:4) said that the spate of arrests, detentions and imprisonment of political activists during this period, coupled with many leaving the country "dented the capacity of the Movement to maintain the momentum of political



Aerial view of the Liliesleaf farm house used as an exhibit during the Rivonia Trial

activity. Obviously the vacuum needed to be filled as quickly as possible. But in so doing, it was unavoidable that activists with varying skills, experience, track records, commitment and discipline were drafted into the Movement without the

usual care and screening processes. A decline in the quality of their contributions was an inevitable consequence of that situation."

Saws and dynamite

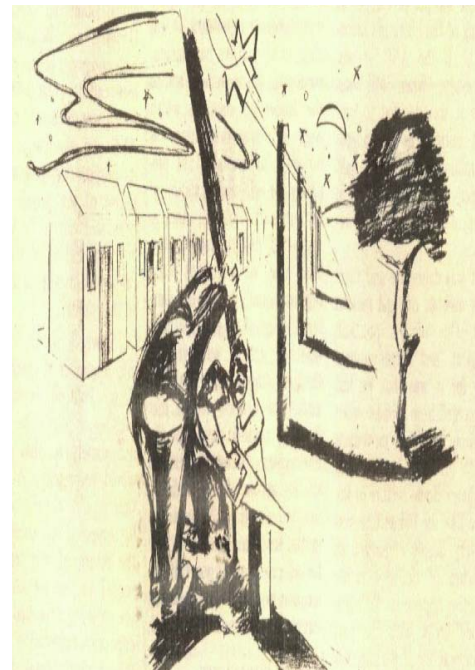
The shift to armed struggle meant that a whole new world of weapons, explosives and ordnance suddenly opened up. Black members of MK had little experience in these matters since black members of the South African armed forces were not allowed to bear arms. Infiltrating weaponry into the country was very difficult at the time because virtually all neighbouring countries were hostile to the liberation movements: South West Africa (now Namibia) was under effective South African control, Bechuanaland (now Botswana) was a British protectorate, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was a British colony and Mozambique was a Portuguese colony. The only MK members that had this experience were white comrades who saw active service during the Second World War, such as Jack, Wolfie and Rusty Bernstein – and they were relatively small in number.

Many people recount their experiences of the rudimentary methods and weaponry used in the early days of the armed struggle. An early favourite tactic of the cadres was sawing off electricity pylons and cutting telephone lines. This was a labour intensive action that only required saws but had the desired effect of sabotaging a strategic installation – and it did not involve loss of life. Andrew Masondo (1986:21-23) tells the story:

The fact that we had no explosives was frustrating because we wanted to blow some electric pylons. One day whilst travelling by car from East London to Alice we noted that some pylons were made of wood. This gave me an idea of how we should deal with the pylons. I then checked on the information about the grid and how the switches

would work. It became clear that we could saw the pylons and pull them down. I also found that if there is a cut the switches go off and that if we chose a good pylon we could affect a big area.

Reggie recalls that one of the first missions that he, Wolfie, Isu and Paul carried out was cutting telephone lines in Springs – using a hacksaw and a sickle that they tied to a broom handle. They chose the target because it was in the same street as the Rev Douglas Thompson, who was known as the “Red Reverend”. They figured that he would give them refuge in the event that something went awry.



Drawing illustrating cutting of telephone wires in progress

Nelson Mandela recounted one of his experiences in Long Walk to Freedom:

MK was then practising setting off explosions. One night I accompanied Wolfie to an old brickworks on the outskirts of town for a demonstration. It was a security risk, but I wanted to attend MK's first test of an explosive device. Explosions were common at the brickworks, for companies

would use dynamite to loosen the clay before the great machines scooped it up to make bricks. Jack Hodgson had brought along a paraffin tin filled with nitroglycerine; he had created a timing device that used the inside of a ballpoint pen. It was dark and we had only a small light, and we stood to side as Jack worked. When it was ready, we stood back and counted down to thirty seconds; there was a great roar and much displaced earth. The explosion

Explosive

First you must not take anything for explosion without checking in house first.

Safety fuze 1 cm per second ? ?

Instantaneous fuze : 30 min per second ? ?

Detonating cord : 650 min per second not a fuze but explosive (America)

There are two kinds of demolition

1. Hot demolition
2. Cold demolition

Hot demolition explodes and changes into smoke and fire (TNT)

Many kinds of cold demolition. Stone is cold demolition, knife putting obstacles in airfield cold demolition.

Throwing of oil on road to prevent cars moving.

Cutting of wire in engine or communication.

Blocking of car by felling trees.

Exhibit during Little Rivonia Trial: Study of different types of demolitions

had been a success, and we all quickly returned to our cars and went off in different directions.
(Mandela 1994:264-5)

Mac Maharaj describes how he addressed the problem of procuring ingredients for pipe bombs:

On another occasion Mkwazi came to me and said, "Pipe bomb ingredients – we can't get them because the regime has found out what ingredients we are using; and when we go to shops, we can't buy them." I said, "What are you missing?" He said, "Charcoal we can make. My problem is sulfuric acid and permanganate of potash for the ignition, and saltpeter." I said, "What's your problem with saltpeter?" "You can't go into any of the shops and buy saltpeter now. There has been a police alert to all suppliers of saltpeter to note who is coming in to buy, so you can't buy it in quantities." I said, "There must be a way."

I thought about the problem and read up a bit, and I found that saltpeter is used as a fertilizer for roses. It was right there in the encyclopedia on gardening. I put on a gardener's overall and went around inquiring at flower shops as discreetly as possible. I was able to buy stocks of it from shops selling gardening fertilizers. I would go there as a very expert gardener on roses, engage in discussions with the shop owners, and display my so-called knowledge about rose gardening. The chap would be very impressed and say, "You know a lot about roses." We get around talking about various fertilizers, and I would reject some and say, "That one I know, it doesn't work so well; it really depends on the soil." Then he would say at some point, "And saltpeter is something that you should consider using." I also found a contact Doha [Ameen Cajee] had

for sulphuric acid. I don't remember where it had been stolen from, but Doha had made the contact. (O' Malley 2007:111)

The difficulties of procuring chemicals and manufacturing explosives were all too apparent. Since dynamite and gelignite (a more potent type of dynamite) were widely used in mines and quarries, many accounts recall missions involving its theft and transportation.

Abdulhay and Tommy recall a mission to Durban when they were asked to pick up a consignment of stolen dynamite.

They drove to Durban in Abdulhay's van, stayed the night at MP Naicker's house and, the next day, met up with Billy Nair. Billy took them to the storage place where they met George Naicker, who passed on crates of the explosives to them. They then had a nerve-racking and arduous journey from Durban to Johannesburg "travelling at 30 miles per hour". They eventually arrived and were able to deliver the consignment to their seniors.

A key problem at the time was that some bombs failed to explode. Sometimes, they were not manufactured properly. Mac Maharaj describes the problem of igniting the explosives:

Many bombs did not go off because the operation depended crucially on putting the sulfuric acid into that gelatine capsule, putting the capsule into the pipe, then quickly sealing and positioning it. You were working in the dark, and if you splashed sulfuric acid onto your hand, it burned you. It was a tiny capsule and you were using an eyedropper; you might think you'd filled it and pressed it, but it could actually be empty. And you couldn't shine torches or anything.

But there was also the problem of dud dynamite supplied by police informers – in particular, Gammat Jardine.

Operations

The SACP sabotage unit constituted by Wolfie, Paul, Isu and Reggie was involved in the disruption of power supply and telecommunications. The same sabotage unit later becomes one of the first MK units in the country. On the night of the launch MK, Isu Chiba describes their first operation as an MK unit. In preparation for going into action, the unit had identified and selected three targets, namely, the Bezuidenhout Street Pass Offices in Ferreirastown, the white section of the Fordsburg Post Office on Central Road and the Bantu Commissioner's Court in Malherbe St in Newtown, an institution that convicted Africans for pass offences on a large scale in order to force them into farm labour. The unit also prepared three explosive devices – made up of potassium permanganate crystals and silver powder and sulphuric acid in plastic capsules served as timing devices.

We were under strict instructions to avoid the danger of injuries or loss of life, civilian or otherwise, as well as to refrain from revisiting the site of sabotage, irrespective of whether or not the attempt was successful.

We started at 10pm and had completed the operation within 30 minutes. The four of us were involved in the operation, except the last one, because Reggie had to go off to his job in a restaurant.

The abovementioned attempts were a huge success. If my memory serves me correctly, 27 acts of sabotage were carried out throughout the country on the night of the 16th of December. But MK suffered its first casualty on the same night in Dube, Soweto when Comrade Petrus

Molefe was accidentally killed instantly when the bomb, which he had been carrying for an act of sabotage, exploded prematurely.

An operation that deserves mention took place in September 1962, roughly a month after the arrest of Nelson Mandela. Isu, who was a platoon commander at the time, was called by his superior, Jack, and told that a major act of sabotage needed to be carried out within the next 36 hours to demonstrate that MK activities were continuing apace despite Mandela's arrest. Isu's difficulty was that none of the units under his command were available to act at short notice. He then contacted unit leaders Abdulhay Jassat and Solly Vania and a member of his own unit, Faker Salie. They met and agreed on a target. However, they confronted the problem that three members of this ad hoc group were unit leaders. Should something happen during the operation, vertical contact between the units and the higher echelons would be cut off. They decided to proceed in view of the political importance of the attack.

They selected the biggest bomb that was available – a 20 pound dynamite bomb that had been prepared by Elias Motsoaledi. The targets they selected were two powerful oil transformers in Vrededorp, close to the railway line and opposite a cinema. It was timed to go off after interval so as to ensure that the cinema patrons were not affected in any way.

Abdulhay was responsible for driving the getaway vehicle, Faker was the lookout and Solly accompanied Isu into the compound. They planted the explosive on a 44-gallon drum containing transformer oil to maximise the impact. The bomb was planted at 7pm and timed to go off at 9pm. They left the



The old Fordsburg Post Office, 1904

vicinity and waited for the big bang, but nothing happened. After waiting for an hour, they realised something was amiss.

The group was once again confronted by several dilemmas. If they left the bomb unexploded, it would land in the hands of the police who would be able to analyse how the bomb was made. But they were under strict orders never to return to the scene of an operation. However, the political context demanded that a major act of sabotage needed to be carried out. They were also confronted by the danger of arrest or something going wrong with the explosive. Chiba picks up the story:

But ultimately, through intense discussion, we said let's go for it and let's see what happens. We had to inspect the bomb. We would at least remove it. ... I went in to find out and determine exactly what was wrong. Now I was sweating – I have no hesitation in saying that I was sweating, I was very, very scared, no doubt about that. Because I simply didn't know. I've seen pictures, read stories, and read books, that when you defuse bombs and do all sorts of things, things can go wrong.

Nevertheless I went there and the first thing we had to do was to disconnect the timing mechanism. That was the difficult part. I disconnected it. Nothing happened. Then there was a fuse, which connected the timing mechanism to the explosive itself, to the dynamite. The fuse was short because it was going to be electronically detonated – you have a very short timing fuse. Having triggered it off you haven't got a minute or two minutes or even five minutes to take a walk or a run. But here it was such a short fuse and, in my estimation, it couldn't have been more than eight or 10 seconds before the bomb went off. And that is

the reason why I asked Solly to widen the hole in the fence in order for me to make a quick getaway. ...

Park the car so I could reach it within about 8 or 10 seconds, and that was done. Then of course I lit the cigarette, ignited the fuse and ran for my life. Just before I reached the car there was a massive explosion. Flames shot high in the sky as a result of the fact that the bomb had been placed on a drum containing transformer oil. ... The getaway was smooth, there were no other hitches – and that was it.

The attack was a huge success and made headlines. Isu reported the operation to Jack, who said: "That while I reprimand you, I nevertheless must say that an excellent job was done by this special unit of heads of units."

Tommy Vassen relates the story of the bombing of a house in Laudium allocated to Nana Sita. Abdulhay was the unit head and did not say where they were going. Upon realising that they were heading to Pretoria, Tommy became very nervous, sure that they were heading for the Union Buildings, the Voortrekker Monument or some other government installation. Abdulhay then informed him that the target was the house allocated to Nana Sita by the apartheid government. Nana Sita was a prominent leader of the Transvaal Indian Congress who was implacably opposed to the Group Areas Act. He flatly refused to leave his home and business in Hercules, which had been declared a white Group Area. The government had allocated him a house because the court insisted that he be given alternative accommodation once he was evicted.



Nana Sita in the middle, with "Nehru" Cap

They were joined by Yusuf Isaacs (also known as Yusuf Asvat) in Laudium, who travelled there by train. They taped up the windows, and set timers and detonators. To this day, Tommy jokingly bemoans being relegated to a lookout, feeling slightly cheated of the danger and romance. By the time they got back to Johannesburg they were told that a news broadcast reported an almighty explosion in Pretoria and there had been no casualties. They were ecstatic!

In 1964, the second National High Command issued a moratorium on armed activity in order not to jeopardise the Rivonia Trial, where the trialists faced the possibility of the death penalty. In mid-June 1964, after the trial was concluded, the moratorium was lifted. On 14 June 1964, Kista's unit attacked the Fietas 11th Street Post Office.

Consequences

Over time and as the resistance escalated, conditions became harsher. The government passed laws that permitted 90-day detention without trial and made sabotage a capital offence. In practice, the police dealt cruelly with suspected operatives and resorted to torture to extract information. Indeed, several operatives were arrested, charged, sentenced and imprisoned.

Nelson Mandela had left the country in 1962 to mobilise support for armed resistance across Africa and other parts of the world. When he returned to the country, he was sought by the police. He was arrested, charged and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

On 17 April 1963, the unit led by Reggie and comprising Indres and Shirish was caught red-handed when attempting to commit an act of sabotage on railway property in Riverlea. A police agent named Gammat Jardine had infiltrated the unit and betrayed them. The three were arrested at the site just past midnight. Isu and Abdulhay were arrested at home in the early hours of that morning.

Reggie and Shirish were severely assaulted at the site of arrest and Indres was shot in the shoulder. Later that day they were taken to the railway headquarters where they were interrogated and tortured with electric shocks.

All five were initially charged with sabotage. The trials later separated the three who were caught red-handed, and the two who were arrested at home. The trio were found guilty and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

Isu and Abdulhay were defended by Harold Wolpe, but charges against them were withdrawn due to lack of evidence.

However, they were immediately detained at Marshall Square in terms of the 90-day detention law, which had just come into effect. There they found Mosie Moola, Wolfie and Leon Levy, who had also been detained in terms of the new law.

On 11 July 1963, the police raided MK's secret headquarters, Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, and arrested the leadership of MK.

As a result, Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich were also arrested and detained at Marshall Square. By that time Wolfie and Leon Levy had left the country on exit permits. While at Marshall Square, plans were made for them to escape.

After 78 days of detention, Isu was approached by Lieutenant van Wyk, who told him that the police were prepared to release him on condition that he would not press charges against the Special Branch for torturing him. He was compelled to give an answer on the spot. "I decided to agree to that condition, but thought that I would refer the matter to the organisation once I was released. I approached the organisation, which instructed me to press charges against the security forces, and I did so," he said. He was thus released on 7 August 1963.

Isu went into hiding as a result of the escape of Harold, Arthur, Abdulhay and Mosie on 11 August 1963.

Mandela was brought from prison to stand trial along with his comrades after the Rivonia arrests. At the Rivonia Trial of 1963-1964, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi and Denis Goldberg received life sentences for conspiring to overthrow the South African government.

This was a very harsh blow to MK as its leadership in the country had been imprisoned in one fell swoop.

Wilton Mkwai, who escaped capture at Liliesleaf, then set up the second National High Command. This structure comprised Mkwai, David Kitson, Isu and Lionel Gay. Mac was the political commissar to the High Command, and John Matthews served on its technical committee. Between June and October 1964, all the members were arrested. They were put on trial in what became known as "Little Rivonia" and received harsh sentences. Wilton was sentenced to life imprisonment, while David, Isu, John and Mac received sentences of 20, 18, 15 and 12 years respectively. Lionel Gay had turned state witness. After this trial, MK and underground activity within the country slowed down considerably for a number of years.

Paul and Babla Saloojee were arrested on the same day as Isu. Paul was released and went into exile. Babla Saloojee

was killed and thrown out of the seventh floor of security police headquarters at Grays Building.

In the first few years of MK's existence, there were a number of instances of betrayal. Patrick Mthembu gave evidence for the state at the Rivonia Trial and was subsequently assassinated. Kholisile Mdwai was responsible for informing on Wilson Kayingo and Vuyisile Mini about their MK activities, along with Zinakile Mkaba, which earned them death sentences in 1964. Mdwai was also responsible for providing evidence that saw another comrade sentenced to 20 years in prison (Masondo 1986:22). Gammat Jardine, a police agent, was able to infiltrate a unit led by Reggie Vandeyar. His betrayal led to a ten-year spell in prison for Vandeyar and two of his comrades. It is said that Gammat was traced to Cape Town where he was assassinated, presumably by MK operatives.



Personal costs

Involvement in MK exacted a heavy toll on most of the main participants. Wilton, Mac, Isu, Reggie, Shirish and Indres landed up on Robben Island. Many went into exile, like Faker, Solly, and Abdulhay. Some managed to live in the country with their lips tightly sealed, such as Kista, Magan and Nanoo. Others were arrested again and spent more time in prison, like Shirish. In most cases, the families were supportive, but in others it led to divorce or alienation from their children.



A panel from Nelson Mandela: the Authorised Comic

Pen portraits of the “Men of Dynamite”

First we sketched an overarching context, which provides us with the big picture and the generally accepted narrative of South Africa’s struggle for freedom. We then stitched an account of the overall story of the “Men of Dynamite” involving all the main protagonists.

But we now move from the big story to a nuanced, personalised, localised and textured account. In other words, this book provides a view “from below.” This perspective permits us to focus on “ordinary” men who rose to the challenge at a particularly difficult point in our history.

It seeks to provide their personalised stories, with its myriad of tensions and emotions. It traces the political and personal interconnections between the protagonists. The work they did both covered their clandestine work and provided sustenance to extended families.

They are placed in the Indian areas of Johannesburg, where they carried out most of their activities. Their roots in the city’s Indian community provided them with support and cover. Equally, their commitment to non-racialism sustained a mutual solidarity in the movement. It shows how they earned the appellation “Men of Dynamite”.

The idea for the title “Men of Dynamite” came from the disparaging name given by the Special Branch, prison warders and the security forces, at the time, to MK operatives from the Indian community, namely “dynamite coolies”.

Indres Naidoo (1982:36-37) describes this – and other forms of humiliation – in his book *Island in Chains*:

‘During all this commotion I noticed a number of warders [at Leeuwkop Prison] walking towards us, laughing and giggling, and heard them talking amongst themselves.’

‘Yes, we’ve got the coolies, the dynamite coolies.’

Next thing, I felt something going right into my rectum. I immediately pulled back and heard a warder chuckling and saying, ‘*Hy’s nog ‘n maiden* – he’s still a virgin.’

The list of characters⁸, arranged alphabetically, is Fatima “Fati” Adam, Ameen “Doha” Cajee, Laloo “Isu” Chiba, Magan Narsee Chhiba, Yusuf Isaacs (also known as Yusuf Asvat), Narendra “Nanoo” Jasmath, Abdulhay Jassat, Ahmed “Kathy” Kathrada, Wolfie Kodesh, Mac Maharaj, Kista Moonsamy, Wilton Mkwayi, Indres Naidoo, Shirish Nanabhai, Faker Salie, Reggie Vandeyar, Solly Vania, Bobby Vassen and Tommy Vassen.

Fatima “Fati” Adam



Fati on her wedding day with her sister, Rookie

It may seem strange that the first pen portrait of the “Men of Dynamite” is a woman. In the early stages of the research, we searched in vain to find even one woman who was directly involved in MK in the Indian areas of Johannesburg in the early 1960s. Well after the title had been settled and close to deadline, our attention was drawn to the likely participation of Fati Adam in MK activities.

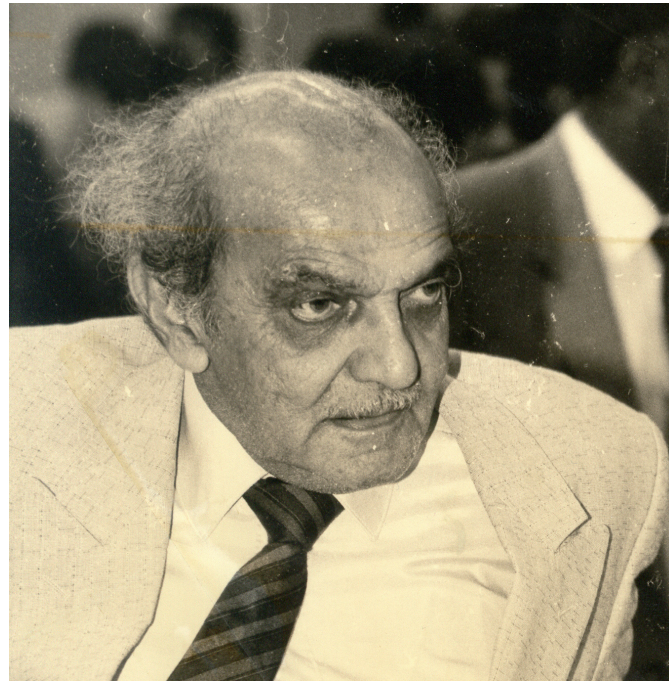
This was an important breakthrough, but information about her life is limited to second-hand accounts, and information on her MK activity is sketchy at best. Nonetheless, we felt that including her was important because it shows that in spite of the great social and political pressures faced by women activists

– especially at that time – many remained deeply committed and involved. We also hope that her inclusion here may help jog some memories so that a more detailed and finer grained account can be developed in the future.

Fatima ‘Fati’ Adam lived in Benoni and was an activist in the Congress movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. She was part of a network of activists that included Aggie Patel and Suliman “Babla” Saloojee. Her sister, Rookie was married to Babla. Mac Maharaj recalled that Fati was part of an underground unit that attempted a radio broadcast on 26 June 1964 by Wilton Mkwayi, who was the leader of the second National High Command. Fati later married Ahmed Guman and they had a son named Baboo. She tragically passed away in a motorcar accident some years later.

Ameen “Doha” Cajee⁹

Ameen Mahomed “Doha” Cajee participated in and witnessed seminal and defining episodes of South Africa’s history in the twentieth century. The victory achieved by the ANC in 1994 was the culmination of a journey in which Doha experienced imprisonment, torture, numerous banning orders and the pain of losing close friends and comrades.



Born in Schweizer-Reneke on 13 April 1918, Doha was the second youngest of seven children. He credited his parents with instilling in him the value of charity regardless of race. He comments that in Schweizer-Reneke, his family was known as “Nkadameng”, which means one who gives.

At the age of 13 Doha moved to Fordsburg, Johannesburg, to begin schooling at the Indian Primary School in Newtown. One of the many initial challenges Doha had to overcome was his inability to understand English. He was fluent in Gujarati and had limited capacity in Sotho, Afrikaans and Tswana. Despite this initial handicap, Doha excelled in school and matriculated in 1942. Doha was also a keen sportsman with a passion for boxing.

He joined the Transvaal Indian Congress in the late 1930s as a supporter of the Nationalist Group led by Dr Yusuf Dadoo. Doha campaigned for the Nationalist Group in 1939 and recalled that there was a plot to kill Dadoo in the run-up to the elections.

Ahmed “Kathy” Kathrada relates this story, which he heard from Doha and others who were present:

A meeting on 4 June 1939 was called by the reactionary leadership of the TIC at Osrin Cinema (later named Avalon) to discuss the planned Passive Resistance campaign of the Nationalist Group. A number of volunteers of the Nationalist Group were attacked by hired gangsters, some or all from Durban. One of the volunteers, Dayabhai Govindjee, was severely attacked, and subsequently died. The story goes that the main target was Dr Dadoo.



Volunteers during the Defiance Campaign receive a final briefing, Anderson Street, 27 May 1952



Doha with Ayesha Dawood, IC Meer and Nelson Mandela, Lenasia, c1991

After attending to the wounded Dayabhai, Dr Dadoo went next door to Mrs Pop's house to wash his hands. Mrs Pop sensed a plot to kill Dadoo, and locked him in the house until it was safe for him to emerge. Although some people were charged for the murder, they were acquitted because the police and witnesses were bribed.

During the 1946-47 Passive Resistance Campaign against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, Doha took a train to Durban to participate in that campaign. He was arrested and, while in jail, he heard that his sister was terminally ill. Fortunately bail was raised for him to return before she passed on.

Doha spent about two years at the University of Fort Hare but left in 1945 without completing his degree. In 1950 he enrolled at Wits University. In 1951, Doha abandoned his studies at Wits and chose to dedicate most of his time to political work. Opting for employment by sympathetic supporters and fellow activists, such as the Pahads, Doha earned a meagre income, but managed to spend a significant amount of time doing political work.

During the 1952 Defiance Campaign Doha was tasked with providing food and transport to the volunteers who were willing to defy apartheid laws and court arrest. Doha was also tasked with printing and distributing leaflets and newspapers such as *Spark*.

In the build-up to the Congress of the People, Doha was once again at the forefront of campaigning, as well as dealing with logistical details to ensure its success.

Doha was recruited by Kathy into Umkhonto we Sizwe. He was part of a unit that carried out acts of sabotage, such as the cutting of telephone wires, in areas such as Alberton,

Durban and then Eastern Transvaal. Doha did not confine his underground activities to acts of sabotage.

One of the critical functions that he fulfilled was transporting key leaders of the movement. He drove Walter Sisulu to Port Elizabeth (for a meeting with Molvi Cachalia) and to Cape Town (to meet King Sabata Dalindyebo from the Transkei).

In 1962, despite a huge manhunt for Nelson Mandela, Doha was asked by Kathy to drive Mandela to Lobatse in Bechuanaland (Botswana).

On 22 November 1963, Doha was served with a five-year banning order. Despite this restriction he continued his political activities. While he was banned, Mac Maharaj approached Doha to assist him with the preparation of gunpowder to be used in pipe bombs. In an effort to shorten the period it would take to dry the gunpowder, Mac and Doha decided to heat the gunpowder on a stove. This caused an explosion and Doha was badly burnt. Mac applied Acriflavin to the burn wounds and telephoned Dr Essop Jassat, a fellow comrade, to come and treat Doha.

A task Doha undertook was the procurement of the ingredients necessary in the manufacture of bombs. A few days after the explosion at Mac's house, Doha summoned Mac to come and see him urgently. To Mac's amazement, Doha had managed to arrange for 40 ounces of sulphuric acid to be delivered to his house and, in fear of a potential police raid, had been sleeping on it.

On 8 July 1964 Doha was detained and taken to Marshall Square. He was placed in solitary confinement, and soon discovered that Nanda Naidoo and Mac Maharaj were also detained in cells adjacent to his.

Mac had been severely tortured and was afraid he might break down and reveal all that he knew about MK, since he was the political commissar to the second National High Command. Fearing that he would cause irreparable and significant damage to the underground, he contemplated suicide.

Doha, by enlarging a hole between his and Mac's cell, began communicating with Mac. He convinced Mac that suicide was not an option and they began developing a strategy to communicate with comrades outside prison. They also began to co-ordinate the information they would reveal during bouts of interrogation in order to corroborate each other's stories, and with the aim of deceiving the police.

After two months the prisoners were transferred to Pretoria Central prison. Joel Joffe, who represented all the prisoners at the "Little Rivonia Trial", persuaded Doha that evidence against the accused was so overwhelming that his refusing to give evidence would merely get him jailed. Since the accused agreed with Joffe's assessment, they convinced Doha that he should give evidence and avoid imprisonment.

Upon his release from prison, despite continued banning orders and other forms of harassment, Doha continued to

play an active role in the movement.

He was vital in ensuring that Ahmed Kathrada and other Robben Island prisoners were informed of what was happening outside the prisons. Through the creative use of codes, Doha would write letters to Ahmed Kathrada under his wife's name.

His friendship with Ahmed Kathrada stretches back to their common hometown of Schweizer-Reneke. Upon his arrest Ahmed Kathrada requested that Doha take care of his famous flat – 13 Kholvad House, Market St, Johannesburg. Doha had asked Kathrada to name his daughter, and Kathy chose the name Djamilla, after the Algerian revolutionary Djamilla Boupacha.

Doha returned to active politics when the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee was formed in 1981 to oppose the elections of the South African Indian Council. He was also elected on to the executive of the Transvaal Indian Congress, when it was revived on 1 May 1983. During the 1980s, leaders of the United Democratic Front (UDF) used Doha's shop as a meeting place after the declaration of successive states of emergency that began in 1985.

Doha married Aisha in 1954 and passed away on 23 March 2005. He is survived by two children, his son Iqbal and daughter Djamilla.

-11-

house, and he assisted with the storing of the transmitter after the broadcast;

- (c) During 1963, at Johannesburg, a meeting of the Regional Committee of the National High Command was held at his house.

(v) Amien Cajesi

- (a) Received instruction in the manufacture of explosives, as a result of a decision of the National High Command;

- (b) His name and address appears, as a person to whom subversive literature may be sent for distribution, on a National High Command document.

(vi) P.A.B. Boyleveld:

- (a) Is a member of the Communist Party, named as an accomplice and co-conspirator;

- (b) Assisted in the publication of the pamphlet known as "Freedom Fighter";

- (c) Supplied funds to accused No. 5 for the purchase of a duplicator;

- (d) During 1963, he received R16,000 from people outside the Republic for the purposes set out in count 4 of the Indictment.

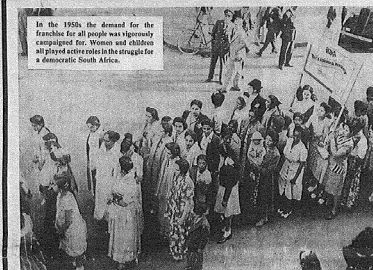
Anti- SAIC News

Bulletin of the Transvaal Anti- SAIC Committee

August 1981

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In the 1950s the demand for the franchise for all people was vigorously campaigned for. Women and children all played active roles in the struggle for a democratic South Africa.

Benoni meeting slams bannings

We are going to be free. About that there is no doubt. It is only a question of how, and when, we are going to be free. So said Bishop Tiro as he urged all South Africans to join the winning side in the fight for freedom to avoid unnecessary violence and bloodshed. The Bishop was addressing one of the biggest political meetings ever held in Atterville. (Benoni) to protest against the recent bannings of Arthur and Ficoz Cichala, George Nkomo, Sonny Adelman, S. Minter and many others. The meeting which was sponsored by a host of religious, cultural, sporting and political organisations from Atterville, and Watville, heard speakers from the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee (TASC) call for a boycott of the coming SAIC elections. Dr. E. Jansen, the Chairperson of TASC, pointed out that the recent bannings had shown that not much had changed in the last 18 years that the SAIC existed. He urged Indians to reject those members, leaders and shaman individuals who intend to participate in the elections, and called for a stayaway from the November 4 SAIC Election.

Don't vote for SAIC says TASC

A committee of 13 people headed by Dr. Essop Jansen was elected at a mass meeting in Lenasia on June 6 to organise a total boycott of the SAIC elections in November. Drs. Ficoz Cichala and Sonny Adelman were elected as vice-chairpersons of the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee (TASC).

The most remarkable feature of the meeting was that many organisations ranging from such different interests as sports to community groups and cultural to educational groups from all over the Witwatersrand came to affirm their total opposition to SAIC. Two hundred and fifty delegates packed the Vilafra hall at the Juma centre.

One needs merely to look at the Coloured CRC to realize that the government will not tolerate criticism against its policies from bodies like the SAIC. Its existence is subject to government approval to show to the outside world that Indians have representative power.

It is thus not surprising that the SAIC has not been able to make any progress at all on our most basic problems like the Group Areas Act, housing, transport, medical and educational facilities, unemployment etc. The SAIC instead concentrates on false promises of change like it is doing in Paganew today.

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POWERLESS

The meeting set many reasons for Indians to boycott the elections but two reasons glared out. First that the SAIC is an ethnic and racist body and secondly that the SAIC is a powerless body as it does not have the power to make laws. These reasons serve to confirm that the SAIC is not only powerless to act positively but is in fact only a showpiece.

The first mass meeting will be held in Lenasia at the Civic Centre on Wednesday 19 August at 8 pm.

Others elected on to the committee are: Mr. A. Momoze (Secretary), Mr. F. Nkomo (Asst Secretary), Mr. A. Momoze (Treasurer), Mr. N. Ficoz (Publicity Secretary), Mr. N.G. Ficoz, Mr. S. Adelman, Mr. A. Cichala, Mr. A. Nkomo, Mr. G. Cichala, and Mr. Y. Khan.

Dr. I. Cichala, a vice-chairperson of TASC and father of Arthur and Ficoz, emphasized that one could not solve the problems of South Africa within the framework of Apartheid. "We need to have representation in town councils, in city councils and Parliament. In short, we want the democratic right to vote to a single parliament." He also called on members of Management Committees to stand down from ineffective government created bodies and join the community in its struggle for a fair share of this country's wealth. Members from the Reform Church and Muslim Youth Movement also spoke out against bannings and detentions. The meeting also appeared to members serving on the President's Council (PC) to resign from it as it was created only to legitimise Apartheid. The R23,000 per (plus benefits) salary should not be any reason for serving on the PC. The meeting ended with the singing of the National Anthem "Nkosi Sikelele Afrika".

Doha was a cited as a co-conspirator in the "Little Rivonia Trial"

A newsletter of the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee, 1981



Ameen and his wife Aisha in Flat 13, Kholvad House

Laloo “Isu” Chiba¹⁰

Remember, remember the fifth of November

The gunpowder treason and plot

I know of no reason

Why the gunpowder treason

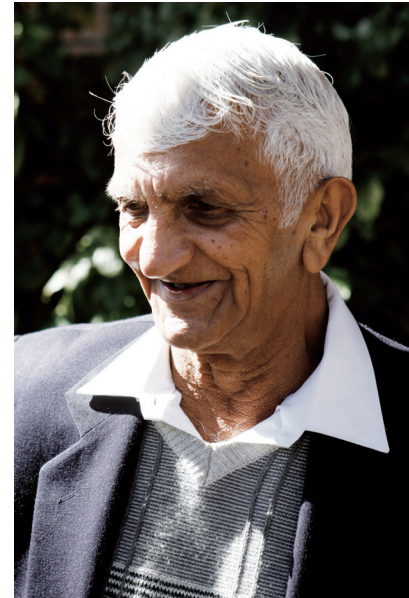
Should ever be forgot (Wikipedia 2009)

This verse recalls Bonfire Night, which is celebrated on 5 November in the United Kingdom and some parts of the Commonwealth, including South Africa. It commemorates the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 when Guy Fawkes and fellow conspirators were discovered trying to blow up the British Houses of Parliament.

Laloo “Isu” Chiba was born on Bonfire Night in 1930 in Fordsburg, Johannesburg. It was fateful, not fortuitous, that he was born on a day that recalls the use of explosives in armed resistance against an oppressive regime.

Unlike many comrades of his generation, Isu did not share a history of activism that dated back to the 1940s and 1950s. However, his involvement in underground structures and MK after the Sharpeville massacre saw the rapid emergence of an energetic, brave and resourceful person who refused to yield to unbearable torture. It was these qualities that saw him rise through the ranks in the space of four years to become a member of MK’s second National High Command.

His parents, who were immigrants from India, named him Laloo Ishwarlal Chiba. His surname was his father’s first name, an old Gujarati custom that has now been discontinued. Since Ishwarlal was a rather long name to pronounce, “Isu” became the shortened version adopted by family and friends.





Chiba siblings: L-R: Isu, Daya, Jashoo, Raman and Luxmi, 1936

Isu's family hailed from a village in the district of Navsari, situated some 30km from the city of Surat, in the state of Gujarat in India. His parents, Chiba and Dahi Mavjee (nee Nana), were both born in 1909. They were engaged in farming activities in their home village until they emigrated to South Africa in the late 1920s. Isu's eldest brother Daya was born in 1927, before they moved to South Africa.

Isu was the second eldest and was born in Mint Road, while his other siblings, two sisters and two brothers, – Luxmi¹¹ and Jashoo and Raman and Govind – were born at 4A Crown Road in Fordsburg.

His father ran a tailoring outfit, sewing khaki pants for African mine workers who worked at Crown Mines. Isu remembers that on Saturdays he and Daya were required to sew buttons and buttonholes for the khaki trousers and shirts produced by his father. Later, Isu's father started to sew woollen trousers and jackets for established tailor shops, and did so on a piecework basis.

Isu attended Bree Street Primary School in Newtown from 1937 onwards, and thereafter the Johannesburg Indian High School in Fordsburg until 1949. He failed his matriculation examinations, but decided not to continue his studies even though his father tried to persuade him otherwise.

After leaving school at 19, he started work as a salesman for a wholesale woollen merchant, and then as a clerk for another wholesale merchant in Johannesburg. Isu picks up the story:

What I was interested in, however, was to work in order to earn money, so that I could have what I then considered to be good times – parties, movies, poolrooms, nightclubs,

the girls and the nightlife. In this process I met and started keeping company with undesirable elements and shady characters.

This type of life went on for about three or four months towards the end of 1950 and the beginning on 1951. Concerned about his conduct, his father shipped him off to India around mid-1951, where his mother and two sisters went to in 1947. Isu stayed for about a year and a half in his ancestral village. He worked on the land, and he helped his mother and brother Daya, who was there for about a year.

While in India he met Luxmi Bhika, who was born on 3 May 1935, and married her on 5 May 1952. She was 17 and he was 21. At the time her father, Bhika Vala, was working in Laingsburg in the Western Cape.

My stay in India, with its grinding poverty and the constant battle on the part of the people, especially in the rural areas, to eke out a living by working in the field and rice paddies from dawn to dusk in a hostile climate ranging from the searing heat of summer to the incessant rains and floods of the monsoon season, shook me to my very roots. The courage and the dignity with which they took this harsh life in their stride left an indelible impression on my mind.

What struck me forcefully was the reality that poverty and hardship co-existed side by side with wealth and good fortune. And that we who are a little more fortunate should consider how best we could be of help to those far less fortunate than ourselves.

The combination of my stay in India under these circumstances, and my marriage to a wonderful, humble and modest, uncomplaining and undemanding woman, constituted the first major turning point in my life.

Isu returned to South Africa without Luxmi in January 1953 and helped his father with tailoring in his workshop. In 1954 he started work at Philips Dairy in Mayfair West. After working as a despatch clerk for about two years, he was promoted to the position of foreman. He worked there for nine years until his arrest in April 1963. His hours of work were initially 4am (later 5am), until about 2pm, seven days a week. He had also undertaken to finance Govind's studies and needed to earn additional income in order to do so. He sold life insurance policies on a commission basis during some afternoons and evenings. Luxmi subsequently arrived in South Africa and over the next few years they had three daughters: Kaylash, who was born on 11 June 1956, Gita on 14 April 1958, and Yashvanti on 14 March 1962.

Isu and his brothers Raman and Govind had developed a close relationship with the Vassen family of Fordsburg. It was here that he met Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada in the early 1950s. By then, Kathy was already a prominent political activist of the Communist Party of SA and the Transvaal Indian Congress. In time, Isu and Kathy became friends. Kathy's arrest for treason



Isu with his uncle, Dajee Pema, shortly before going to India

in 1956 got Isu thinking seriously about his own political involvement. Although he passively supported the Congress movement, he was not involved in its activities.

I was highly impressed by Kathy's political involvement and his dedication to the noble cause of liberation, and was inspired by all this to become politically active in the late 1950s, with the Congress movement in general, and the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) in particular. The combination of being inspired by Kathy on the one hand,



*Isu's wife Luxmi with their daughters,
Gita, Yashvanti and Kaylash*

and the disturbing political developments of early 1960 – such as the Sharpeville massacre, the banning of the ANC and PAC and the declaration of the State of Emergency on the other hand – constituted the second major turning point in my life.

Reggie Vandeyar recruited Isu into an underground cell of the banned South African Communist Party (SACP). "Over the years I have been of the firm impression that I had been recruited into the Party in 1959, but it appears that I had joined in the second half of 1960, after the State of Emergency had been lifted," Isu said.

In early 1961, the underground cell – in line with the SACP's decision to engage in sabotage activity before the formation of MK – was changed into an SACP sabotage unit under the leadership of Wolfie Kodesh. The unit included Paul Joseph, Reggie and Isu. In the early days, units were engaged in the disruption of power supply and telecommunications.

During the latter half of 1961 the SACP's sabotage units were instructed to disband and become part of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). The reconstituted unit contained exactly the same individuals, except that Wolfie now reported to his superiors in the Johannesburg Regional Command of MK.

When MK was launched on 16 December 1961, the unit had identified and selected three targets, namely the Bezuidenhout St Pass Offices in the centre of Johannesburg, the white section of the Fordsburg Post Office on Central Rd, and the Bantu Commissioner's Court in Malherbe St in Newtown, where Africans were convicted for pass offences on a large scale and those convicted became an important source of cheap farm labour.

The unit had also prepared three explosive devices, made from a mixture of potassium permanganate crystals and silver powder. This mixture was laboriously prepared at home using coffee grinders and placed into two-pint plastic water bottles. Sulphuric acid in plastic capsules served as timing devices. "We were under strict instruction to avoid the danger of injuries or loss of life, civilian or otherwise, as well as to refrain from revisiting the site of the sabotage, irrespective of whether or not the attempt was successful," he said.

Isu recalls that 27 acts of sabotage were carried out throughout the country on the night of 16 December. But MK had also suffered its first casualty when Petrus Molefe was killed instantly when the bomb which he had been carrying for an act of sabotage exploded prematurely.

The unit to which Isu belonged was instructed that each member of the unit had to recruit three people as MK operatives under his leadership. Wolfie was instrumental in setting up this structure of 16 operatives that constituted a platoon. Isu was made the platoon commander in overall charge of the four units from 1962 to April 1963. The platoon carried out various acts of sabotage directed against symbols of apartheid such as the Pass Office and Magistrates Court, as well as pylons, telecommunication lines and railway signal boxes. Some of these acts of sabotage were highly successful, while others failed completely.

Kathy was instrumental in arranging a month's holiday from 10 July 1962 in the Soviet Union for Isu, who was accompanied by John Matthews (who later became accused No. 4 in the "Little Rivonia Trial").

"Contrary to the allegations by the State that I was sent to the Soviet Union to train as a Communist, I had gone there for a holiday – courtesy of the South African Communist Party," he said.

Although he and John were supposed to travel together, they were separated when John had to undergo an urgent hernia operation. So Isu went on to Leningrad alone, and from there to Yalta, a seaside resort on the Black Sea, where the historic agreement was signed by the Allied Forces in the Second World War.

In Moscow, Isu met Dr Yusuf Dadoo and his daughter Shireen, both of whom were staying at the Party hotel. Dadoo was instructed by the movement to leave the country in 1960 after the Sharpeville massacre. Isu briefed "Mota", as Dadoo was fondly known, about the activities of the Transvaal Indian Congress and MK, without indicating that he was involved in MK activity. "However, I did mention that on the basis of sabotage activity taking place in some Indian areas, it would be fair to assume that sabotage units made up of Indian members were probably also functioning. I suppose that when I was arrested in 1963, he must have recalled the fact that I had not mentioned my involvement in MK," Isu said.

Isu was arrested on 17 April 1963 when one of the units in his platoon was caught red-handed while attempting sabotage on railway property in Riverlea. A police agent named Gammat Jardine had infiltrated the unit, which was led by Reggie Vandeyar, and also comprised Indres Naidoo and Shirish Nanbhai. The three had been arrested at the site just after midnight. Isu and Abdulhay Jassat were arrested at home in the early hours of that morning.

Reggie, Shirish and Indres were severely assaulted at the site of arrest and Indres was shot in the shoulder. They were then taken to the railway headquarters later during the day where, except for Indres, who had been shot, the other four were severely tortured with electric shocks.



Isu and Kathy having a discussion at the launch of the exhibition on Walter and Albertina Sisulu, 2008

All five were initially charged with sabotage. The trials were later separated between the three who were caught red handed, and the two who were arrested at home. The trio were found guilty and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Isu and Abdulhay were defended by Harold Wolpe, but charges against them were withdrawn due to lack of evidence. However, they were immediately detained at Marshall Square in terms of the 90-day detention law, which had just come into effect. There they found Mosie Moolla, Wolfie and Leon Levy, who had also been detained under the new law.

Meanwhile, as a result of the arrests of the leadership in Rivonia on 11 July 1963, the National High Command of MK had been smashed. Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich were also arrested and detained at Marshall Square. By that time Wolfie and Leon Levy had left the country on exit permits. While at Marshall Square, plans were being made for them to escape.

After 78 days in detention, Isu was approached by Lieutenant van Wyk, who told him that the police were prepared to release him from detention on condition that he not press charges against the Special Branch for torturing him. Isu was compelled to give an answer on the spot. "I decided to agree to that condition but thought that I would refer the matter to the organisation once I was released. I approached the organisation, which instructed me to press charges against the security forces, and I did so," he said.

Isu went into hiding as a result of the escape of Harold Wolpe, Arthur Goldreich Abdulhay Jassat and Mosie Moolla on 11 August 1963.

Isu was then co-opted onto the second National High Command led by Wilton Mkwayi, who managed to evade

arrest at Rivonia. Other members of the second National High Command were David Kitson and Lionel Gay.

It needs to be pointed out here that I had serious reservations about serving on such a high structure of MK – especially in view of the fact that the track record of my political involvement had only stretched over a couple of years. But Comrade Wilton explained to me that with the arrest of so many comrades, and with many other comrades leaving the country, there was no alternative but to make do with whosoever was available. I was left with no alternative when he insisted that I serve on that structure.

Isu was arrested by Major Britz on 6 July 1964. He was then taken to Langlaagte Police Station and detained in terms of the 90-day detention law. From the peephole of his cell he saw Lionel Gay, during his exercise time, and realised that he had also been detained there. Isu was tortured by being made to stand on an A4-sized piece of paper from about 10am on Monday morning to about 5pm on Wednesday afternoon – nearly 58 hours – without sleep.

"This is my recollection as well as my evidence to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, in terms of papers served on the Minister of Justice, who was sued for my torture, the duration was said to be 37 hours only," Isu said.

After the expiry of the first 90-day period, Isu was re-detained for a further period from 2 October 1964 until 30 October 1964. He was charged with two counts of sabotage; one count under the Suppression of Communism Act, and the fourth count for "soliciting, accepting or receiving any money for furthering the purpose of the campaign by means of unlawful acts".

Others charged with the same counts were Wilton Mkwayi, who was accused number 1, David Kitson (accused number 2), John Matthews (accused number 4), and Mac Maharaj (accused number 5). They were held at the Johannesburg Fort for the duration of the trial.

All five accused were found guilty on all four counts in what became known as the "Little Rivonia Trial". Among other things, they were found guilty of 58 acts of sabotage. Wilton was sentenced to life imprisonment; David to 20 years; Isu was sentenced to 18 years; John to 15 years; and Mac to 12 years.

At the time of being sentenced, Isu's wife Luxmi was 29; and his three daughters – Kaylash, Gita, and Yashvanti – were eight, six and two-years-old respectively.

Wilton, Mac and Isu were transferred from the Johannesburg Fort to Leeuwkop Prison, where they stayed for two weeks. Mac and Isu were transported by truck in handcuffs and leg-irons to Robben Island Prison on 5 January 1965. Wilton Mkwayi followed later because the Special Branch wanted to extract more information from him. Their white co-accused were imprisoned in Pretoria.

Isu's prison number was 8/65, which meant that he was the eighth prisoner to be admitted to Robben Island Prison in 1965. Isu and Mac were both taken to the maximum security B section, which housed Rivonia trialists Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni. The B section was totally isolated from other sections of the prison, which was a maximum-security prison. Over the years,

the number of prisoners there averaged 28-30 prisoners, all confined to single cells.

After spending several months in one or two cells, Isu occupied cell number 25 from 3 September 1965 until he was transferred to Victor Verster Prison on 6 May 1982, almost 17 years in a cell measuring little more than two metres each way.



Drum magazine's report on the Rivonia Trial

In 1965 Isu was granted permission by prison authorities to study matric, which he passed in December 1967. Thereafter he enrolled for a BA degree in economics and history with UNISA, which he obtained in 1973. At one stage he was demoted to D group and lost his study privileges for two years.

The High Organ of the ANC on Robben Island – the leadership – set up a Communication Committee headed by Kathy. Isu served on the Communication Committee of the B section for several years, smuggling out messages to the outside world, and to the general sections, where the vast body of political prisoners were kept in communal cells. Kathy commented:

Isu and Mac [also a member of that committee] were very innovative in finding novel ways of secreting messages in match boxes, the soles of shoes and tennis balls – thereby escaping detection by the authorities.

He was involved in the transcription, as well as the preparation for smuggling from prison of Mandela's *Long Walk To Freedom*. "Contrary to the general belief that I was primarily responsible for the transcription of Madiba's secret manuscripts relating to his autobiography, it must be made clear that it was Mac Maharaj who did the bulk of the work. The transcribed manuscript was successfully smuggled out from prison by him in 1976," Isu said.

Isu was also involved with Mike Dingake in secretly capturing the essence of the life and times of Walter Sisulu. Mike successfully smuggled the notes out of prison when he was released from prison in 1980.

After hammering stones in the courtyard for about six months, they did hard labour at the lime quarry for nearly 13 years. Isu was involved in numerous hunger strikes in protest against the prevailing prison conditions.

Isu was transferred from Robben Island to Victor Verster Prison in Paarl on 6 May 1982, where he spent seven months in preparation for his eventual release. He was transferred by van to Leeuwkop Prison in Pretoria in December 1982, and from there he was released on 17 December 1982.

Upon my release I was neither banned nor restricted. Unlike the situation with some comrades, who upon their release went home to find neither their wives nor their families, and who had ended up in dire straits, I was fortunate that my reintegration into society was an extremely smooth and happy one.

At the time of Isu's release, the political landscape was changing. In January 1983, at the conference of the Transvaal Anti-South African Indian Council Committee, Dr Alan Boesak, who had recently been elected president of the World Alliance of Reform Churches, made the call for the formation of a united front against apartheid. The same conference also recommended the revival of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC). Isu became active in the TIC, which was revived on 1 May 1983, and later became one of its vice-presidents.

He participated in the activities of the United Democratic Front (UDF), which was launched nationally in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town on 20 August 1983.

Between 1983 and 1985 Isu worked as a salesman for his niece in her ornament store in Smal Street; as a shipping clerk for Nasim Pahad; and for Cuban Shoe Stores owned by Cassim Saloojee and his family.

On 20 July 1985, Isu attended the funeral service of Matthew Goniwe and three of his comrades who were murdered by agents of the apartheid regime. As a result of escalating political resistance across the country, a State of Emergency was declared later that day. On the return trip by bus, Isu

Date of discharge/Datum van ontslag _____
 Appeal noted/Appel aangetekend _____
 Alterations in sentence/Veranderings in vonnis _____

Checked by/Nagegaan deur _____

R.C.A./R.A.A. No. 410 . 10 . 64 Case/Saak No. 518/64
 Police Station/Polisiekantoor M. Plein

18-12-1964
 4969/64
 LEEUWKOP PRISON

In the Supreme Court of South Africa.

In die Hooggeregshof van Suid-Afrika.

(Witwatersrand Local DIVISION.)
 -AFDELING.)

To the Sheriff of the Province of Transvaal
 his lawful Deputy.

Aan die Balju van die Provinsie _____
 sy wettige Adjunk.

GREETING.

SALUT.

WHEREAS at a Criminal Session of the Supreme Court of South Africa holden before me at

NADemaal by 'n strafsitting van die Hooggeregshof van Suid-Afrika gehou voor my te

JOHANNESBURG
 on the Eighteenth day of December
 in the Year of our Lord
 One Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty Four

op die _____ dag van _____
 in die Jaar van ons Here
 Eenduisend Negehonderd _____

the undermentioned prisoner was duly convicted of the crime(s) undermentioned and was sentenced by the Judgment of the said Court to undergo the punishment(s) affixed to his (her) name in such place as may be prescribed by lawful authority:

_____ ondervermelde gevangene skuldig bevind is aan ondervermelde misdaad/misdade en by vonnis van genoemde Hof veroordeel is om die straf (strawwe) by sy (haar) naam vermeld te ondergaan in sodanige plek as wat die wettige owerheid mag voorskryf:

THIS IS THEREFORE to command you in the name of the State to keep and detain the said prisoner in your Custody until he (she) shall have suffered the said punishment, or be discharged therefrom according to law.

SO DIEN DIT OM U te gelas om in die naam van die Staat genoemde gevangene in u bewaring te ontvang en te hou totdat hy (sy) genoemde straf ondergaan het of ooreenkomstig die wet daarvan onthef word.

Prisoner's Name. Naam van Gevangene.	Sentence. Straf.
<u>LALOO CHIBA</u>	<u>Eighteen (18) years</u>
Age/Ouderdom <u>34 years</u>	<u>imprisonment.</u>
Nationality/Nasionaliteit. <u>SA.</u>	
Race/Ras. <u>INDIAN</u>	
Sex/Geslag. <u>MALE</u>	
Classification of fine must be stated. Klassifikasie van boete moet aangegee word.	Of what Crime convicted. Aan watter misdaad skuldig bevind.
	<u>Guilty of sabotage on all</u> <u>4 counts as charged.</u> <u>Treated as one for purposes</u> <u>of sentence.</u>

FOR WHICH THIS SHALL BE YOUR WARRANT.
 WAARVOOR DIT U LASBRIEF IS.

Given under my hand, at
 Gegee onder my hand te Johannesburg this, 18th
 day of December 19 64
 dag van _____
 Registrar. A. J. J. J.
 Griffier.

W. B. M.
 Presiding Judge.
 Voorsittende Regter.

Isu's warrant of committal

was arrested by the security forces and detained at the Protea Police Station on 21 July 1985 in terms of the emergency regulations.

A few days later, all the detainees were transferred to Johannesburg Prison (also known as Diepkloof Prison or “Sun City”). After the first two weeks, a number of detainees were released, leaving a total of 69 detainees. Those who remained in detention for virtually the entire State of Emergency, were Paul Mashatile, Amos Masondo, Prema Naidoo, Ismail Momoniat, Feizel Mamdoo, Yusuf Areff and Mohseen Moosa and Maniben Sita, who was in the woman’s section.

They went on a highly successful 10-day hunger strike against prison conditions, surviving on a mug of hot water with one or two spoons of sugar twice or thrice a day, apart from drinking ordinary water. Isu was released from detention when the emergency was lifted on 7 March 1986.

For three months, Isu worked on a voluntary, part-time basis for the TIC at its headquarters in AEL Centre in Mint Road, Fordsburg. This was during the twilight period between the two states of emergency. In the light of an anticipated second State of Emergency, activists were instructed by the movement to go into hiding. The State of Emergency was ultimately declared on 12 June 1986 and some people emerged from hiding in February 1987.

Isu then started work at Linc Designs in Booyens, a furniture manufacturing concern owned by the Motani Family. He worked there for seven years until April 1994, initially as a dispatch clerk and later as head of administration.

When the ANC was unbanned in February 1990, he was appointed by the leadership of the ANC onto the executive

committee of the PWV Region. The Lenasia Branch of the ANC was launched in July 1990, and Isu served as chairperson from 1990 to 1994. He served on the ANC’s Gauteng provincial disciplinary committee from about 1995 to 2004. He served on the ANC Gauteng Interim Leadership Core (GILC) from May 2000 until the Provincial Conference in 2002.

I was privileged and honoured to be included in the delegation headed by Comrade Nelson Mandela for a tour of the Far East. Other members of the delegation included Comrades Thomas Nkobi, Ismail Meer and Barbara Masekela, amongst others. The tour included India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, Japan and Brunei. I spent a few days in London before returning to South Africa in November 1990. Kathy was again instrumental in my inclusion in the delegation.

Isu was elected an ANC MP on 27 April 1994, and re-elected on 2 June 1999. He served on the Parliamentary portfolio committees of housing and correctional services during part of the first term, and thereafter on the Select Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA). He also did a three-year stint with the Audit Commission, which monitored the work and performance of the Office of the Auditor-General. Isu declined to stand for another term in April 2004 and retired from public life.

He was awarded the Order of Luthuli (Silver) by President Thabo Mbeki on 16 June 2004 as part of the celebrations marking Ten Years of Democracy.

Isu acknowledges the support of his family and the innumerable friends and comrades that he has met and worked with over the years.



*In 1977, the South African government
allowed the media to photograph the
political prisoners on Robben Island*

Early in 1961, Isu's mother died in Fordsburg of cancer at the age of 52. Several years later his father remarried while on a visit to India, and he eventually settled there permanently. He also married a lady by the name of Luxmi, and they had a daughter named Nimita. He died in March 2000 at the age of 91. Isu is the last surviving member of the original family of eight.

His brother Daya left school in standard six to help support the family and was trained by his father as a tailor. He settled down in Rustenburg with his wife Luxmi and four children. Daya was active in the Red Cross Society; and with his son Suresh, he was actively involved in the TIC and UDF. Daya and Suresh were detained during the 1986 State of Emergency and were served with restriction orders upon their release. Daya died on 27 September 1987 in a car accident while returning to Rustenburg after attending a funeral in Lenasia.

His sister Luxmi was a dressmaker who had married Jeram Valla in India in 1951. She returned from India and they had two daughters, named Veena and Neela. "She was an extremely independent minded person who impressed upon my wife the necessity of earning some sort of income. She therefore taught my wife how to sew blouses, and went so far as to buy a sewing machine for her so she could supplement the financial support she was receiving from the family by earning an additional income. My wife and daughters often spent the school holidays in Rustenburg," said Isu.

Raman was the elder of Isu's two younger brothers. He qualified as a doctor at Wits University, after completing his B Sc degree. In 1963 he married Lillian Thomas and they had a son Ramesh and a daughter Maya. "Raman was the mainstay of my family while I was on Robben Island. The quality of his care and concern for my wife and daughters was such that it

must be said without any hesitation that he went far beyond the call of duty. In 1974 he emigrated to Canada, but before doing so he bought a house for my wife and daughters, and made sure that they were comfortably settled in Lenasia and would not be hassled by landlords.

While in Canada he regularly sent them an allowance and also catered for my financial needs on the Island," Isu said.

Jashoo, the younger of Isu's two sisters, had married Govind, a tailor by profession in December 1952. They also lived in Crown Rd and had assisted his family in many ways while he was incarcerated.

Jashoo's husband's brother, Goolab, was also living at 4A Crown Rd until he married Rami. They then settled in Jeppe, where their house was Isu's hideout during the early 1960s as it was during the 1980s. Prominent leaders of the UDF such as the Rev Frank Chikane, Valli Moosa, Amos Masondo, Raymond Suttner and Ismail Momoniat used their home for secret meetings. They later shifted to Mayfair where people like Billy Nair and Curnick Ndlovu stayed when they came to Johannesburg. Ismail Momoniat also arranged a number of underground meetings at their home in the later 1980s and early 1990s. Goolab, Rami and their children Meena and Dhiren provided great support to the struggle at great risk to themselves.

Govind was the youngest of their family of eight, who from an early age showed a keen interest in aeroplanes and aeronautics. Since blacks were not allowed to pursue studies in that field in South Africa, he went to the United Kingdom, after completing a B Sc degree at Wits University. He married Zarina Carrim in England, but they eventually divorced.

He struck up a relationship with Allison Lewis, a co-worker at Rolls Royce, where he worked after he qualified. They had a son named Phillip.

In the 1970s, Govan gave up his prestigious job at Rolls Royce to work full time for the ANC in exile. His first project was to establish a secret communications network between the ANC in exile and the ANC's underground structures in South Africa. He later served on MK's National Ordnance HQ Committee, responsible for moving ANC military equipment to forward areas in the frontline states.

He returned to South Africa in December 1990 and subsequently worked for the National Intelligence Agency in Pretoria. His life partner was Louise Colvin, whose underground name was Angela Brown.

Isu pays tribute to a special friend and comrade and members of his family:

The beginning of my association with Kathy nearly fifty years ago constituted the second major turning point in



Isu receiving the Order of Luthuli, Silver from President Thabo Mbeki, 2004



The Chiba family portrait, c1943 L-R: Isu, Raman, Jashoo, Chiba (father), Dahi (mother), Luxmi, Govind and Daya

my life. For the past half a century now Kathy has been an elder brother to me, a comrade, friend, my political mentor, an advisor, a pillar of strength through thick and thin and a constant source of inspiration to me.

Whenever I reflect on this matter, I am reminded of some lines of a poem entitled "Sea Fever", which I learnt at school as a youngster. More or less it goes thus:

I must go down to the seas again

To the lonely sea and the sky

And all I ask is a tall ship

And a star to steer her by

Kathy has been one of the two stars in my life who has "steered me by" through life's journey.

The other star who has "steered me by" through that journey is my wife Luxmi, who I married fifty-seven years ago, and which event significantly contributed to the first major turning point of my life.

[My story] would remain incomplete if mention is not made of the fact that, apart from being blessed with three wonderful daughters, my wife and I have also been blessed by three wonderful sons-in-law, five grandsons and two granddaughters. My eldest daughter Kaylash is married to Rashid Moosa, Gita to Vimal Lalla, and Yashvanti to Navin Chibba. All three are successful businessmen in the power tools trade, in the sportswear industry, and in the field of information technology respectively.

Six of my grandchildren have already graduated, one is in the process of completing his university education: Shahin Lalla (B Com in IT, University of Pretoria); Shafiq Moosa (B Com Marketing Management, Midrand University); Shakil Moosa (B Com Business Administration, Midrand University); Shakila Lalla (B Com Tourism Management, Midrand University); Zain Moosa (Mechanical Engineering, Wits University); Leila Chibba (B Com Industrial Psychology, University of Johannesburg); and Nishaan Chibba (B Com Accounting, University of Johannesburg).

Isu Chiba's story is indeed remarkable. In a short time, between 1960 and 1964, his outstanding qualities came to the fore. A tribute published in the ANC's journal Sechaba in 1967 stated:

So Chiba, a new recruit, had a great opportunity to prove himself – and he emerged as an outstanding political worker with great qualities of leadership. ... Even hardened interrogators such as Major Brits found themselves unable to break his resistance. ... Chiba has many friends among both the African and Indian communities. They speak of his dashing good looks, his gaiety, his lively sense of humour – and of his loyalty and superb courage. ... Laloo Chiba demonstrates the role which South African Indians have played – and are still playing – in our struggle. The sense of brotherhood which was first fully brought home to Chiba by Sharpeville has been shown by his actions to be no shallow sympathy but a profound identification with the African people.

These virtues endured during the long years of incarceration on Robben Island, during the turbulent days of struggle during the 1980s and early 1990s and in the service of the ANC and the Parliament of the Republic of SA during the era of democracy after 1994.

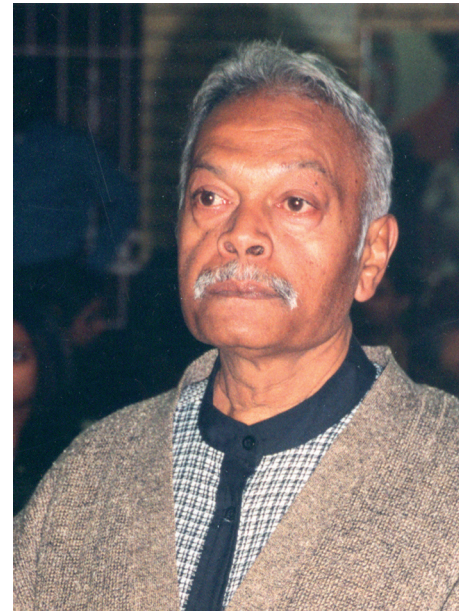
Magan Narsee Chhiba¹²

Magan Narsee Chhiba's parents, Narsee Bhana Chhiba and Veerabhen, were born in India and emigrated to South Africa some time between 1910 and 1912. His father initially worked as a travelling salesman and later became a hawker of goods purchased from the fresh produce market.

Magan was born on 14 August 1948 and his family lived on Terrace Rd in Fordsburg. He was the second eldest in a family of five children. Magan completed his standard five at Bree Street Primary School. The apartheid government tried to compel Indians to move to Lenasia by decreeing that their children could only be educated in the township. Magan refused to go to Lenasia and never attended high school.

He got a job in the mail order section of MDC Wholesalers, which was owned by Valabh Bhaga. Possessing a flair for art, Magan began to research the process and skills needed for calligraphy and signwriting during evenings and weekends.

Recognising his talent, he was recruited by the then prestigious Garlicks department store. When, many years later, he was retrenched by Garlicks, his self-taught sign writing skills would allow him to open his own business. Magan also had a passion for karate and was an active member of the famous Mohan Hira's Karate Academy.



Magan's older brother, Tony, was active in the TIYC and influenced Magan to take an interest in politics. He also befriended TIYC activists such as Paul Joseph. Magan, along with his friends Omar Bhamjee, Joe Cajee and Nanoo Jasmath, began to attend meetings held at Duncan Hall and Red Square.

Upon his recruitment into MK, Magan was initially placed in Paul Joseph's unit. When that unit was depleted with the departure of Omar Bhamjee and Amien Cajee for training, he was shifted to Solly Vania's unit, and later to Kista Moonsamy's unit. The initial act of sabotage undertaken by this unit was the attempted bombing of the Fordsburg Post Office. The gelignite dynamite, supplied by the infiltrator Gammat Jardien, would not explode and the target was abandoned.

The next act of sabotage that Magan was involved in was the bombing of the 11th Street Post Office. The unit responsible, again led by Kista, consisted of Nanoo, Magan and Joe Cajee.

In the aftermath of the arrest of the members of the second National High Command the unit was instructed to disband. Though the police raided Magan's house, he was not arrested or questioned. Over the years Magan kept in contact with the members of his unit, in particular Nanoo Jasmath and Amien Cajee.

Magan was a staunch supporter of the anti-apartheid movement and often attended TIC meetings in Lenasia. With the support of his wife Jaimati, who he married on 2 February 1973, Magan participated and worked with many community organisations, including the Lenasia Yuvak Mandal.

On 26 July 2000, this modest, humble and hard working man passed away after suffering a heart attack. He is survived by his wife, Jaimati, and his daughters Danujhas and Hasmita, and grandson Harshil.

In 2002 Magan was posthumously awarded the "Honouring our Human Rights Champions" by the Lenasia Human Rights Association. In 2008 Magan was honoured by the Satya Sai Centre for the community work he had undertaken.



Magan Narsee and his wife Jaimati

Yusuf Isaacs¹³

Yusuf Isaacs (also known as Yusuf Asvat) was born in Newclare, Johannesburg on 6 March 1935. Yusuf traces his political roots to his father, who participated in Mahatma Gandhi's *satyagraha* in 1913-1914. He was the second youngest of eleven siblings.

At an early age his family relocated to Fordsburg and Yusuf attended Bree Street Primary School and later Johannesburg Indian High School. At school he met Congress activists such as Reggie Vandeyar, Abdulhay Jassat and Paul Joseph, and they influenced him to participate in the activities of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress. His sisters, Dr Zainab Asvat and Amina Cachalia, were leading women's activists in the 1940s and 1950s; and his brother-in-law Yusuf Cachalia was a prominent member of the Transvaal Indian Congress at the time.

At a young age he began selling progressive newspapers such as The Guardian and he participated in rallies held at Red Square in Fordsburg. He recalls being actively involved in the Potato Boycott and the Tobacco Boycott.

When Umkhonto we Sizwe was formed in 1961, Yusuf was approached to join a unit led by Abdulhay Jassat. He clearly recalls two missions he was involved in. The first was the bombing of the house allocated to Nana Sita in Laudium in terms of the Group Areas Act. Yusuf was tasked with transporting the explosives to Pretoria from Johannesburg by train. The other members of the unit, Abdulhay and Tommy Vassen, travelling by car, picked him up from the station and drove to Laudium. He assisted by priming the explosives, and recalls hearing the detonation on their way home.

Yusuf also participated in an attempt to drop Molotov cocktails onto trains from the bridge near Braamfontein. The attempt on a train carrying timber was unsuccessful.

Yusuf recalls that he was first approached by Gammat Jardine, a police infiltrator, with the offer of procuring explosives. Yusuf informed Reggie Vandeyar that whilst Gammat was an acquaintance he could not vouch for his trustworthiness. Gammat thereafter betrayed Reggie, Shirish and Indres Naidoo to the police.

When Abdulhay was arrested, Yusuf went into hiding. A few weeks later his brothers, fearing for his safety, smuggled him to Botswana. After nine months, when it was clear that the detainees did not reveal names during torture, Yusuf returned to South Africa. He married Elaine (now deceased) in 1958 and they had four children, one of whom is deceased. Yusuf has retired from his profession as a tradesman and currently lives in Mayfair.



Yusuf with his sister Amina Cachalia, and his wife Shireen

Narendra “Nanoo” Jasmath¹⁴

Narendra “Nanoo” Jasmath, the fourth of eight siblings, was born on 22 August 1939 into a family immersed in revolutionary politics. As a child he was regaled with tales of his father’s participation and experiences during India’s struggle for independence. Nanoo’s father, Jasmath Nanabhai, was a leading member and later secretary-general of the Transvaal Indian Congress. The flat in Fordsburg in which the Nanabhai family lived overlooked the Red Square, and was often frequented by members and leaders of the Congress movement.

Like many of Nanoo’s generation who lived in the Fordsburg area, he attended the Bree Street Primary School and then the highly politicised Johannesburg Indian High School.



Like his brother, Shirish Nanabhai, Nanoo joined and participated in TIYC activities. He frequently attended meetings, distributed leaflets and promoted as well as participated in the various campaigns of the TIYC.

In 1957 the Congress movement held a Torch Light Demonstration against the General Laws Amendment Act at Red Square. The demonstrators were surrounded by police and baton charged. Nanoo was severely assaulted by the police for participating in the demonstration.

When Nanoo was recruited, he was assigned to a unit led by Kista Moonsamy. The act of sabotage that Nanoo was involved in was the bombing of the 11th St Post Office. This unit, led by Kista, also consisted of Magan Narsee and Joe Cajee.

Following the arrest of Isu Chiba, the unit was instructed to disband. Considering that his brother Shirish was serving a ten-year sentence on Robben Island for sabotage, Nanoo opted to keep a low profile.

Nanoo, a shopkeeper by trade, got involved in community organisations such as the Transvaal Hindu Seva Semaj. He remained a supporter of the TIC and often attended mass meetings held in Lenasia.

Nanoo passed away on 31 August 2009 and is survived by his wife Shanti and three children, Nilesh, Ramila and Harshila.



Nanoo Jasmath and his wife Shanti

Abdulhay Jassat¹⁵



Abdulhay Jassat, the youngest of three sons, was born on 12 June 1934 in Vrededorp, Johannesburg to parents who hailed from the village of Takoli in the Surat district of the state of Gujarat, India. His father was a hawker, sustaining the family by selling clothing to domestic workers in the affluent, white northern suburbs.

Aside from a brief stay in Alexandra shortly after his birth, Abdulhay was raised in Fietas. It was a relatively small area, officially known as Pageview. To its north, was the white working class

neighbourhood of Vrededorp (from 1st St to 8th St); to the east was Braamfontein; the Brixton cemetery was to the west; and to the southeast lay Fordsburg. Pageview was close to the Johannesburg city centre.

Abdulhay vividly remembers his formative years in Fietas. Although it was a predominantly Indian area, the community lived harmoniously alongside the smattering of Coloured, Malay, Chinese and African families. Aside from a few wealthy merchants, Abdulhay remembers Fietas as a poor community in which most breadwinners would either hawk or sell fruit and vegetables for a living.

Nonetheless, he describes Fietas as always filled with energy and spirit; with people who were resilient and resourceful. "I remember frantically and endlessly running around playing street soccer or cricket with balls that had been made up of old rags," he said.

His earliest memories of racism, discrimination and poverty have been etched in his mind. Everyone knew that straying north of 8th street into white Vrededorp was dangerous because white racist thugs would inevitably beat you up. Similarly, on their way to school, they could only walk on the Bree Street Police Station side of the road because the other side was considered to be white.

"I also became aware that the only sports field in the area was reserved for wealthy Indians since the rest of us were too

poor to afford the compulsory club attire," he remembers. He noticed that his friends often dropped out of school. This was usually the result of poverty because their parents did not recognise the value of education and the youth were required to earn a living at an early age to help support their families.

These early stirrings of consciousness of class and racial discrimination would bloom within Abdulhay to become the force that led to his political involvement in the fight against apartheid.



Central Indian High School (better known as Congress School) sports day

At the age of seven, he started school at the nearby Bree Street Primary School. Later, he moved to the Johannesburg Indian High School, where he completed his matric in 1952. This had previously been a whites-only school that was transferred to the Indian community in 1942. As a result, all the teachers at the school were white and reactionary. Abdulhay was almost expelled in 1951/2 for mobilising the entire school to attend a political trial. Moosa "Mosie" Moolla, a close comrade, was not so lucky – he was expelled for going to jail in the Defiance Campaign. After he completed his matric, Abdulhay worked as a commercial traveller to earn a living.

Abdulhay was strongly influenced by his cousin Peppy Rawat, who urged him to join the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC) in 1951 at the age of seventeen. Peppy highlighted the discrimination faced by oppressed communities under apartheid and the power of organisation and mobilisation in challenging the status quo.

After joining the TIYC, Abdulhay would join comrades in chalking slogans on walls in Sophiatown and Newclare and it was through these excursions that he met and worked with Patrick Molaoa and Joe Modise, members of the African National Congress Youth League. Through these relationships he became acutely aware of the poverty and deprivation African people were forced to endure.

Abdulhay recounts numerous close escapes from the police during the 1950s. On one occasion, Abdulhay, Solly Essakjee, Lionel Morrisen, Suliman "Babla" Saloojee and Herby Pillay had gone on a slogan-chalking mission to Sophiatown in response to the Western Areas Removal Scheme. They narrowly escaped the clutches of the law when they were

pulled into a house in Sophiatown. There they found at least thirty other people who had similarly taken refuge.

Mosie recalls another close encounter. They had been putting up stay-at-home posters in Fietas when a Coloured plainclothes policeman approached them quite calmly to tell them he was arresting them. The policeman said he would not handcuff them if they agreed to follow him to the police station, which they said they would do. Mosie was carrying the posters and Abdulhay was carrying a bucket of poster glue as they walked through the subway between Fietas and Fordsburg. They hatched a plan in their broken Gujarati: Abdulhay would throw the glue at the officer and they would run off in different directions, knowing that the policeman was unarmed. The plan worked and each of them found a safe hideaway where members of the community took them in and hid them until it was safe to emerge.

Abdulhay says that the TIYC was a livewire organisation involved in many activities. It ran a school in the basement of a building on the corner of Market and West streets, where they taught young people skills like typing and shorthand; and the facility would be used to print posters and leaflets. After the TIYC activists were taught how to silkscreen posters by members of the Congress of Democrats, they became proficient at producing their own posters.

Abdulhay remembers being inspired by the leaders of the TIC and the Communist Party, such as Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Yusuf and Molvi Cachalia and Mervy Thandray. Mervy was singled out for his selfless commitment to the cause in spite of severe personal hardships.



Mosie and Abdulhay, with Ebrahim Desai (centre), were born on the same day and have shared many common political escapades

Abdulhay was very involved as a volunteer in the build-up to the Congress of the People in Kliptown. He went into backyard shacks of many houses in Newlands, Newclare and Kliptown to document the demands of these communities. On weekends Abdulhay and his comrades would conduct this same exercise in rural areas outside of Johannesburg. On many occasions when they needed to rest on the road, they would be taken in by people in the area and offered a place to sleep and a meal.

The collection of these demands became the primary source of the Freedom Charter. He recalls the Congress of the People weekend on 25 and 26 June 1955 as a monumental event that was attended by people from all over the country. The meeting was held in an open field in Kliptown, Soweto next to Takolia's shop. Banned people who could not participate watched from the roofs of shops and any raised platform they could find.

After the banning of the liberation movements in 1960, Abdulhay was recruited into the Communist Party. He was also approached by Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada to join Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) when it was formed in 1961. Abdulhay remembers the debates at the time, when many members of the TIC executive were opposed to the turn to armed struggle.

"In the early days of MK, we were amateurs; we knew very little about explosives. We were given the dynamite with the detonators, planted it at a target, lit it up and ran away as fast as we could," he said.

In 1962, he was drafted into a platoon of MK operatives led by Isu Chiba. Abdulhay was asked to lead his own unit

that comprised Tommy Vassen, Yusuf Asvat and Moosa Moosajee. He was involved in a number of activities with his unit that included an attack on pylons in Alberton, railway transformers in Fietas and the procurement of dynamite.

When Reggie, Indres and Shirish were betrayed by Gammat Jardine and arrested, Abdulhay and Isu were collected at their homes by the police, questioned and tortured. As a result of the inside information Gammat had provided, the police were aware that Isu and Abdulhay were leaders of other cells and made the decision to detain and torture them.

Abdulhay remembers that Gammat's entry into the group was clouded in suspicion and distrust from the outset. Gammat had openly stated that he had previously been a policeman and as a result they followed him for a month to see if he was suspect in any way. Everything seemed free of suspicion and because the order to recruit Gammat came from above, they could not question it and welcomed him into the group. When they were questioned, the police made reference to a number of different occasions when they had seen their cars, either involved in the procurement of dynamite or at sites where explosions occurred. All of this intelligence was courtesy of Gammat.

Abdulhay and Isu were initially charged with sabotage, together with Reggie and his crew. Later, their trials were separated; eventually, the charges were dropped due to lack of evidence. When they tried to leave the basement of Johannesburg Magistrate's Court, where the trial was held, the Special Branch policeman Dirker informed them that they were being detained under the 90-day detention law that had just come into effect.

After 78 days in detention, Isu was released. Abdulhay remained incarcerated at Marshall Square with a number of other comrades. Abdulhay, along with Mosie Moolla, Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe escaped from Marshall Square in early August 1963.

He made his way to Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania, where the ANC had set up its headquarters in exile. During his time there, Abdulhay was able to serve the ANC using his business skills. The movement received a number of gifts from different countries and organisations across the world, in particular, crates filled with fabric. They used these supplies to open a shop that ran successfully for about three years. It was eventually closed when a government minister requested a bribe to ensure they could continue to operate. Moses Kotane responded by saying that that would never happen.

Abdulhay married Harlene on 1 April 1965. They lived together in Dar es Salaam for at least six years. During this time she taught at St Xavier's Catholic School, Temeke Primary, Aga Khan Nursery and finally ran a nursery school for ANC, MPLA and Frelimo children. It was essential for wives of full time ANC functionaries to work in order to maintain their families as ANC employees were given an allowance.

Abdulhay left Dar es Salaam after eight years in December 1972 because he needed special medical treatment after he began to suffer from epilepsy. He was sent to Moscow for treatment and the doctor informed him that as a result of the shock treatments when he was tortured, parts of his nervous system had been damaged. He was prescribed a heavy dose of drugs until he was eventually weaned off the medication. To this day he continues to use a milder form of treatment for his condition.



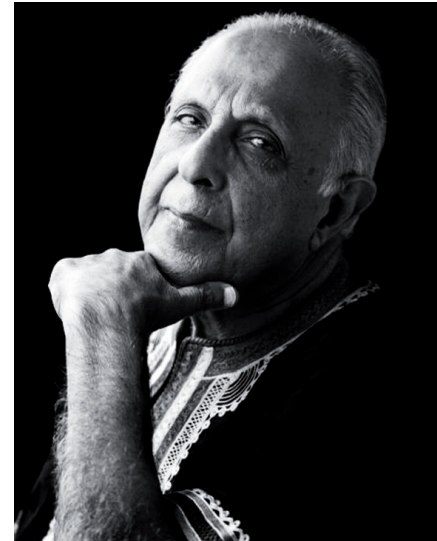
Abdulhay and his wife Harlene

The couple moved to London where they initially stayed at Harlene aunt's house until Harlene found and bought a house of their own. During this period Abdulhay worked in the finance section of the ANC with Reginald September, Alex La Guma and MP Naicker. Harlene worked in London for 22 years.

They stayed in London until 1993, when they returned home to participate in the democracy they spent most of their lives fighting for. Harlene worked at the Gauteng Legislature from 1994 until 2002, when she retired. Abdulhay has worked from 1994 to the present.

Ahmed “Kathy” Kathrada¹⁶

By the time Ahmed “Kathy” Kathrada joined the newly formed Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in 1961, he had already been a veteran of the struggle for 20 years. Kathy recalls that he was among MK’s earliest recruits, and also served “on the regional command that identified potential targets even before the official launch of the armed wing on 16 December 1961”. He continues: “Furthermore, I was a member of a unit that carried out modest sabotage with the dual purpose of assessing targets and testing the efficacy of our equipment.” (Kathrada 2004:142)



However, Kathy soon realised that his aptitude lay in doing political work rather than in the military field. After consultation with close comrades, he terminated his membership of the Regional Command of MK. Kathy states that “at no time did I object in principle to the decision to move to an armed struggle, and I have never harboured the slightest regret about MK’s formation.” (Kathrada 2004:142)

Kathy’s five-year banning order expired in January 1962 and was only reissued nine months later. He used this respite to travel across the length and breadth of South Africa for various personal and political reasons. He spent several weeks in Cape Town. At

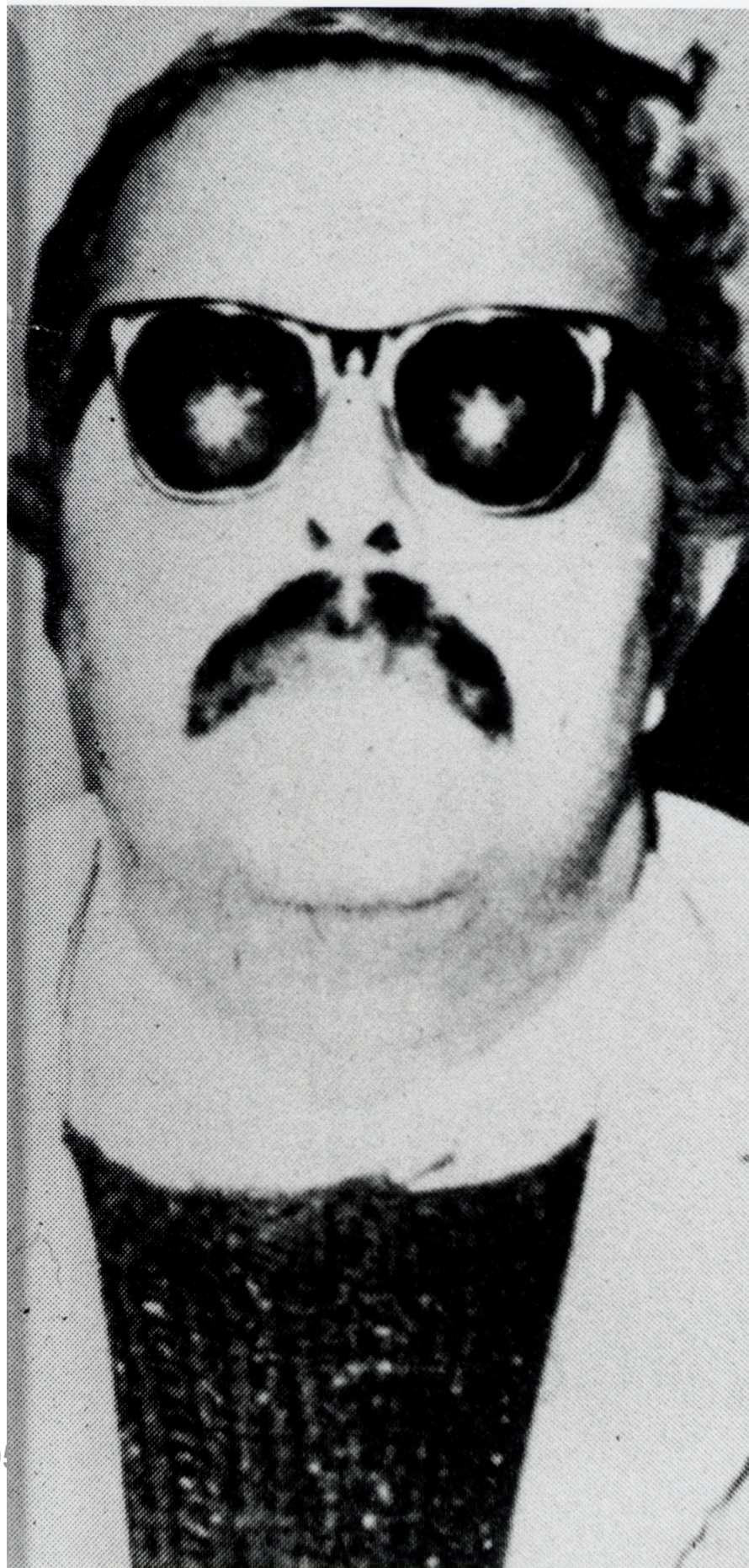
Moses Kotane's request, he twice drove the ANC and SACP leader to Groutville, near Durban, to visit Chief Luthuli, who was banned and restricted to his home. Both these trips were during 1962.

The consultations with Moses Kotane were requested by Chief Luthuli. In certain respects, Chief was unconventional. Asking Moses, who was the General Secretary of the Communist Party, to visit him in Groutville was an example. He had his Secretary-General, and other senior officials. Yet he would ask Moses (and at times also Ismail Meer) to discuss issues with him. Obviously I didn't know what they discussed, but I arranged with friends for safe transport to Groutville and safe venues.

During this period, Kathy was part of a small committee that was responsible for the transport and security of Nelson Mandela. They made arrangements for Mandela to illegally leave South Africa to canvass support from the newly independent African countries for both the ANC and MK. Kathy drove with Walter Sisulu to the then Bechuanaland to make the necessary arrangements for Mandela's safe return to South Africa.

A few weeks later, after reporting to Chief Luthuli on his trip to Africa, Mandela was arrested on 5 August, near Howick. Kathy became secretary of the Free Mandela Committee, and launched the "Free Mandela" campaign that was to develop into one of the greatest international campaigns in later years.

*Kathy disguised as Pedro,
when he went underground*



While Madiba was in prison awaiting trial, Joe Slovo (Madiba’s lawyer) took me along a few times, ostensibly to consult with Madiba as a potential defence witness. He was concerned about the material – his diary and other documents – that he had left at Rivonia. On our next visit to him, we informed him that Rivonia was “clean”. Only to find during our trial that nothing at all had been removed to safety.

This drew the attention of the Special Branch, who slapped Kathy with an order for house arrest:

On the eve of my house arrest, Walter and I were at a conference, when Wolfie Kodesh brought the Sunday Times, which had a front-page headline about the police

looking for Sisulu and Kathrada. It was obviously to place us under House Arrest. It was decided that Walter should immediately proceed to Bechuanaland where a conference of the ANC was being held. And because I was Secretary of the Free Mandela Committee, it was decided that I should proceed to Madiba’s trial in Pretoria. The house arrest orders were served on me during the tea break, when I was having a chat with Madiba. Sergeant Dirker ordered me to immediately return to Johannesburg because I was contravening one of my banning orders that confined me to Johannesburg. I was the second person to be placed under house arrest, after Helen Joseph.

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G 353

GEVONNISTE GEVANGENE
SENTENCED PRISONER

Groep Group B.	No. 468/64	Rand No. 1/5725.
Geloof Religion Islam	Naam Name Ahmed M. Kathrada.	
OPMERKINGS REMARKS	Misdad Crime Sabotasie.	
	Vernis Sentence Lewenslang.	
DUIMAFDruk-THUMB IMPRESSION	Datum van vernis Date of sentence 12/6/64.	
	Datum van ontbinding Date of discharge	

Kathy's prison card



Kathy's prison uniform and utensils

Soon after the arrest of Reggie Vandeyar, Indres Naidoo and Shirish Nanabhai for MK activities on 17 April 1963, Kathy was instructed by the SACP to go underground, to vacate Flat 13, and relocate to Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia. Kathy donned a disguise and assumed a new identity as the Portuguese Pedro Perreira. After a short spell at Liliesleaf, he moved to a garden cottage in Mountain View, a Johannesburg suburb. Kathy returned to Liliesleaf for a meeting of various people, including the MK High Command, to discuss the document "Operation Mayibuye".

Operation Mayibuye was a very controversial document. The gist of the debate was whether it had been accepted by the ANC's leadership structures, and the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The High Command more or less claimed that once it has accepted it, it means that the ANC had accepted. That debate continued for a long time. It even crops up now and then.

Then on that ill-fated day, 11 July 1963, Liliesleaf farm was raided, and Kathy was arrested with all those who were present and held under the 90-day detention law. Thereafter, Kathy was charged under the Sabotage Act, in what infamously became known as the Rivonia Trial, with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Denis Goldberg, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni.

Kathy and the other Rivonia trialists were sentenced to life imprisonment on 12 June 1964. This was seen as a reprieve because they were expecting the death sentence.

Kathy spent the next 26 years and three months in prison – about one year in Pretoria jail, 18 years on Robben Island and seven years at Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town. He was released on 15 October 1989, two months after his 60th birthday.

What were the events and circumstances that contributed to the development of the young Kathy, who at the age of 34 was convicted for sabotage, sentenced to life in jail with no possibility of parole? What set him on this path, and how did it begin?

Kathy was born on 21 August 1929 in Schweizer-Reneke, a small rural South African town about 300km from Johannesburg in what is now the North West Province. Both Kathy's parents came to South Africa from Gujarat, India to escape poverty and seek a better life in a distant land.



A young Kathy

His childhood in this rural town was to lay the basis of his deep and abiding belief that all human beings were equal regardless of religion or race. But childhood came to an abrupt end when he had to leave his home and family to live in Johannesburg when he was eight years old to attend school. This was common practice among Indian families living in the rural towns of the then Transvaal Province: to send their sons, and sometimes daughters, to Johannesburg for schooling.

It was here that he was introduced to politics when he joined a non-racial youth club run by the Young Communist League in 1941 at the age of 12. He handed out leaflets at street corners for the League. He was involved in the anti-war campaign of the Non-European United Front, was active against the Pegging Act in 1941 and collected funds for the Bengal famine relief of 1943.

As for my anti-war activities, the main and about the only thing I can recall is going outside mosques where many cars were parked. We removed metal plates from the bumpers that read "Governor-General's War Fund".

At the age of 17 Kathy participated in the Passive Resistance Campaign against the "Ghetto Act" (Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act) mounted by the Transvaal Indian Congress and Natal Indian Congress. He gave up his schooling to work fulltime at the office of the Passive Resistance Council, and was one of 2 000 people arrested and imprisoned for defying a law that discriminated against Indians.

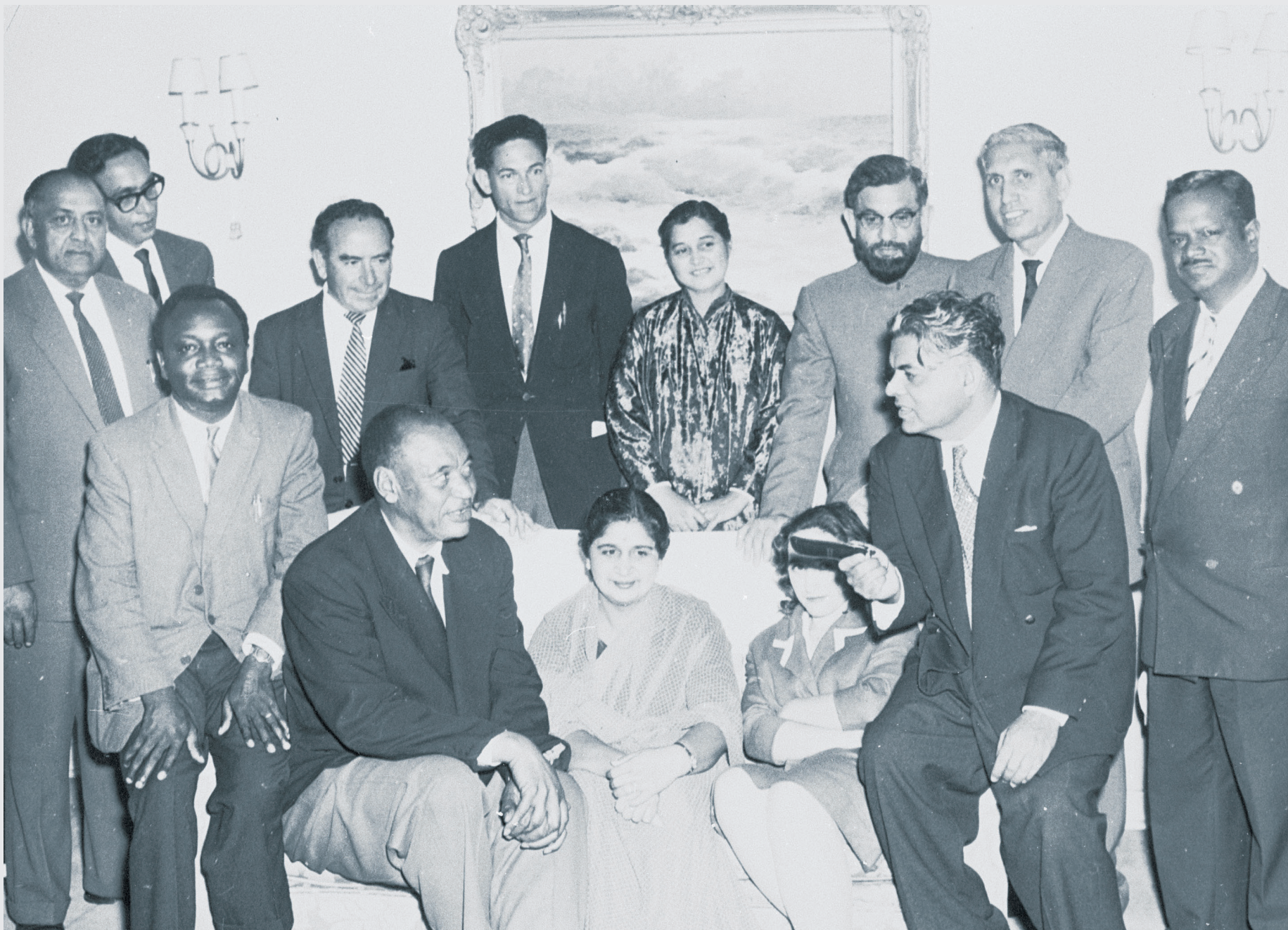
Kathy was a founding member of the Transvaal Indian Youth Volunteer Corps that helped in the Passive Resistance Campaign, and was elected secretary-general of its successor, the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, later to become its chair.

As the alliance between the ANC and Indian Congresses developed, he came into close contact with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, JB Marks and other leaders of the liberation movement. As secretary of the Youth Action Committee he worked tirelessly to promote joint action by the youth wings of the Congresses.

I met Madiba when I was in high school and Madiba was at Wits. He was doing law with Ismail Meer and JN Singh. After lectures the three of them would come to Flat 13, and that is where I met Madiba for the first time. It was in 1945 or 1946.

During this period Kathy moved into the famous Flat 13, Kholvad House, where Ismail Meer, a prominent Congress activist, was staying.

In 1951, Kathy was selected by the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress as a delegate to visit Berlin to attend the World Youth Festival, jointly organised by the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students (IUS). From there he visited Poland, where the Auschwitz Concentration Camp left an indelible impression on him. He finally travelled to Budapest and worked at the headquarters of the World Federation of Democratic Youth for nine months.



Some of Kathy's close comrades from the 1950s, including JB Marks, Yusuf and Molvi Cachalia, Goolam Pahad and Mervy Thandray

Returning to South Africa, he immersed himself in the organisation of the Campaign of Defiance Against Unjust Laws that was jointly launched by the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress in 1952. The Defiance Campaign witnessed over 8000 people of all races courting imprisonment. He was tried as part of a group of 20 leaders of both Congresses, including Mandela and Sisulu. They were sentenced to nine months in prison with hard labour, suspended for two years for organising the Defiance Campaign.

In 1953 Kathy was elected to the executive of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. He joined the protests against the Bantu Education Act of 1954, which enforced rigid segregation in schools, and was active in the campaign against the removal of Africans from Sophiatown in Johannesburg. The regime then served banning orders on him, prohibiting him from attending gatherings and from membership of a long list of organisations. In 1954, Kathy was placed under restrictions by the Security Police and was arrested several times for breaking his banning orders.

In 1955 when the Indian school in Johannesburg was moved out of the city to the segregated location of Lenasia, over 30km away, he helped organise the Central Indian High School in Johannesburg. In the same year, he also helped organise the Congress of the People, which proclaimed the Freedom Charter – though he could not attend it personally because of a banning order.

On 5 December 1956, 156 leaders and activists of the congresses were arrested, and charged with High Treason. This number was first reduced by about 60, and 90 were left to appear before three judges. The 90 were divided into three batches of 30 each. Kathy, Mandela, Sisulu, Duma Nokwe, Mosie Moolla and Farid Adam were among the 30 against whom the trials proceeded. The 30 were acquitted in 1961. The other 60 were automatically discharged.

Even during the trial, he continued his political work. The regime restricted him to Johannesburg in 1957. While they were on trial, in 1960, the ANC and PAC were banned. He was detained, with the other defendants, when a State of Emergency was proclaimed after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. After the end of the Treason Trial, Kathy lived a semi-clandestine life for over a year, evading arrest and performing several missions until his arrest at Rivonia.

Kathy was released from prison on 15 October 1989. After the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990, Kathy served on the interim leadership committees of both the ANC and the South African Communist Party. When he was elected to the ANC's National Executive Committee in July 1991, he explained: "I approached Comrade Chris Hani [General Secretary of the SACP] and explained to him that I could not do justice working actively in two organisations. I asked the Party to release me so that I could concentrate on my work in the ANC."



A poster of the 156 accused during the Treason Trial of 1956-1961
using Eli Weinberg's famous collage of the trialists



Kathy at the launch of "Memoirs" at the Constitutional Court, Johannesburg, 2004

During the same year, he was appointed as head of ANC public relations as well as a Fellow of the University of the Western Cape's Mayibuye Centre. Kathy went on the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in 1992.

In the first democratic South African elections in 1994, he was elected as a member of parliament for the ANC; and in September 1994 he was appointed as the political advisor to President Mandela in the newly created post of Parliamentary Counsellor. In June 1999, Kathy finished his five-year term as an MP and declined to serve another term.

Between 1997 and 2006, he served as chairperson of the Robben Island Museum Council. In 1997 he stood down from the National Executive Committee of the ANC. Kathy published *Letters from Robben Island* in 1999, *Memoirs* in 2004, *A Simple Freedom* in 2008 and *Dear Ahmedbhai, Dear Zuleikhabehn* in 2009.

In addition to receiving the Isithwalandwe Award (the ANC's highest accolade) whilst still in prison, Kathy has also been awarded several honorary doctorates in South Africa and around the world. He was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman by the President of India in 2005.

Kathy and close comrades established the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation in 2008, to promote non-racialism, the establishment of an archive, promotion of the history of the Indian contribution to the struggle in South Africa and setting up a research centre.

Wolfie Kodesh¹⁷



It is unusual to come across an illustrious man who expected no personal recognition or reward for his personal sacrifices; a man who consciously denounced the pedestal of privilege, recognising that freedom for a few was inevitably freedom for none. Wolfie Kodesh is the epitome of such a man. This fearless and spirited leader embodied noble characteristics that were often disguised by his small stature. Wolfie has left indelible footprints on South Africa's thorny path to freedom.

Wolfie Kodesh, the son of a successful businessman, was born in Benoni on 6

April 1918. His mother Fanny Shapiro was born in the east end of London and came to South Africa in the early 1900s. His father's business could not withstand the impact of the Great Depression and neither could his parent's marriage endure the strain of financial collapse. Shortly after his parents separated, Wolfie's mother moved Wolfie, his twin sister and his brother to Cape Town.

The relocation was difficult since the family was forced to live in rat-infested back rooms in the heart of the Woodstock slums. This change in standard of living was a turning point that gave birth to his political passion. To sustain the family in these new circumstances, Fanny Shapiro opened a corner shop located on Page Street, which was then notorious for the thriving shebeens, freely available drugs, prostitution and hostile gangsters.

When he turned twenty, Wolfie's political consciousness began to grow. He joined the Communist Party of SA and started selling *the Guardian* newspaper in the streets of Woodstock and the neighbouring District 6.

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, Wolfie was recruited into the army and represented South Africa in the European campaign and was later deployed to Libya. Wolfie was handed his first charge of "mutiny" after he hijacked a lecture and spoke about the Springbok Legion's progressive policy. He was appalled by the treatment of black soldiers and he agitated for equal rights, equal pay and the right to carry weapons. Six bayoneted guards arrested him, but the charges were eventually dropped.

On his return, Wolfie and his brother inherited their father's brickworks. It took him only 18 months to reject the business world in exchange for political involvement. He sold his shares to his brother and returned to Cape Town in 1947.

He took up a full-time position in the Communist Party, actively working as a journalist and paper seller. His writing gave voice to those suffering in the slums of Cape Town and the emerging shantytowns on the Cape Flats. He used the newspaper as a platform to campaign for better sanitation around the Bokaap, Woodstock and District 6 areas. His work earned him his first banning order, which prohibited him from working as a journalist. He continued working until *the Guardian* itself was banned.

He was then appointed as one of the directors for *New Age*, which succeeded *the Guardian*. Ruth First and Wolfie became renowned for exposing the plight of potato workers and the infamous Broederbond after months of monitoring their Braamfontein offices.



CPSA poster demanding African Soldiers be given guns, 1942

Following the banning of *New Age*, Wolfie was issued with a second banning order meant to confine his freedom of movement to white areas and he was compelled to report to a police station every Monday. Ruth's father offered Wolfie a job as a laundry collector, which allowed him to move around. While doing the job, he was able to distribute banned literature and collect money for various political organisations.

After the banning of the ANC in 1960, Wolfie went underground. He changed his appearance by growing a beard, swapping his comfortable clothes for more formal attire and even went as far as getting custom-made platform shoes so he would appear taller. Unfortunately the shoes hampered his movement and caused him to stumble. While on the run, Wolfie did not return to his apartment, knowing that everyone was being watched. He limited his movement by spending the night sleeping in one of his friend's gardens and even spending cold winter nights sleeping under the starless sky of the Observatory golf course.

Wolfie's life revolved around daily meetings intent on keeping the movement alive. He offered his services driving activists around and negotiated with the owner of a car auction house to exchange his car every three weeks. He often accompanied Moses Kotane, a leader of the Communist Party and the ANC.

When the State of Emergency was lifted, Wolfie bought a flat on the border of Yeoville and Berea in Johannesburg under a false name. In his autobiography *Long Walk To Freedom*, Nelson Mandela tells the story of his two-month stay with Wolfie Kodesh in that very flat:

During those few months underground I lived for a few weeks with a family in Market Street, after which I



Cover of New Age

shared a one-room ground floor bachelor flat with Wolfie Kodesh in Berea.

I relied on Wolfie to procure reading material for me and I fear that I took over his life, infringing on both his work and pleasure. But he was such an amiable, modest fellow that he never complained.

I annoyed Wolfie every morning, for I would wake up at five, change into my running clothes and run on the spot for more than an hour. Wolfie eventually surrendered to my regimen and began working out with me in the morning.

I felt safe in Berea. I did not go outside, and because it was a white area, the police would probably not think to look for me there. While I was reading in the flat during the day, I would often place a pint of milk on the windowsill to allow it to ferment ... it becomes thick and sour, rather like yoghurt. I even prevailed upon Wolfie to try it, but he grimaced when he tasted it. One evening, after Wolfie had returned, we were chatting in the flat when I overheard a conversation going on near the window. I could hear the two young black men speaking in Zulu, but I could not see them as the curtains were drawn. I motioned Wolfie to be quiet. 'What is "our milk" doing on that window ledge?' one of the fellows said.

I realised then that I needed to move on. I left for a different hideout the next night". (Mandela 1995:265-6)

Wolfie became very involved in the launch of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Because of his experience in the Second World War, he was appointed commander of MK units in Fordsburg and surrounding areas. He worked closely with Isu Chiba, Reggie Vandeyar and Paul Joseph in setting up an MK platoon in that area, identifying targets and overseeing execution on sabotage acts.

Wolfie was detained under the 90-day detention law on 10 May 1963, and shortly after, he was escorted on a train to Cape Town. When his attempt to escape at Beaufort West was unsuccessful, he was taken into solitary confinement in the Caledon Square Police Station. He was issued an exit

permit by Minister of Police John Vorster and was forced out of South Africa. He left for England where he would continue to work for the ANC, travelling the world raising funds for the liberation struggle.

Wolfie Kodesh formally returned to Cape Town in 1991 and continued to work for the ANC. In 1998 the Deputy Minister of Defence Ronnie Kasrils presented Wolfie with three medals for 30 years of service in the liberation struggle.

Although a committed activist, Wolfie had very little time to attend to himself and as a result he never married nor had any children, saying, "It would have been unfair to any spouse or child." He died on 18 October 2002 at the age of 84.

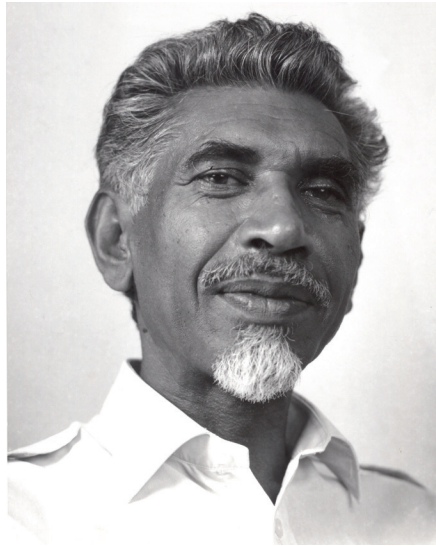


Photo of Nelson Mandela taken in the early 1960s when he was dubbed the "Black Pimpernel" by the media



Wolfe at a rally in London, 1990

Mac Maharaj¹⁸



Mac Maharaj, named Sathyandranath Ragunanan by his parents, was born on 22 April 1935 in Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal and spent his early years in a township called Lennoxton, in Newcastle. Mac matriculated from the local school, St Oswald's High School in 1952, and enrolled at the University of Natal Non-European section (UNNE), for a BA, graduating in 1956. He then did one year of an LLB but UNNE would not register him for the second year. And he could not get a permit to go to either the Transvaal or the Cape to enrol at Wits University or the University of Cape Town. He then looked to London to complete his law studies.

In 1957, Mac left South Africa to study towards a law degree. He found a job, saved money and eventually enrolled at the London School of Economics. He met Vella and Patsy Pillay who had fled South Africa to escape apartheid laws that prohibited marriage between whites and blacks. Vella was a prominent member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and through him, Mac was formally integrated into the SACP.

Whilst in London, besides work and studies, Mac immersed himself in anti-colonial campaigns, worker issues and various left and Communist Party activities. Mac found Britain exhilarating. He recalls "in London there were people from all over the world, little groupings supporting the liberation struggles in their different countries ... It was a very cosmopolitan environment, and we were bound by a unity we felt when we met one another". (O' Malley 2007:82-3).

During this period, Mac married Tim Naidoo in London. Mac had met Tim whilst he was a student in Durban.

In 1960, Mac assisted with the printing and distribution of the *African Communist*. Soon thereafter he was approached by Vella Pillay to undergo training in printing in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). He had to forego his law degree when he left for the GDR. A few months into his training, he learnt of the SACP's turn to armed struggle. Mac immediately made a request to be trained in sabotage work. He then spent 11 months in the GDR. He trained for six months "in all aspects of printing and five months in sabotage - how to use dynamite, blow up pylons, cut railway lines, and manufacture homemade explosives". (O' Malley 2007:90) Mac asserts that he was "the first person to undergo training outside the country after the decision to turn to organised violence as a means of struggle". (O' Malley 2007:90)

Mac returned to South Africa in May 1962. After spending a few weeks at his parents' home in Newcastle, he was contacted by Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada who was a full-time functionary of the SACP and told to go to Johannesburg. Kathy had arranged for him to stay with the Naidoo in Rocky Street, Doornfontein (the home of Indres Naidoo) as a boarder. The Naidoo were under the impression that he was apolitical, and not interested in the liberation struggle.

Mac was placed in an SACP underground unit led by Kathy, and which included Abdulhay Jassat, Ebrahim Moolla and Solly Esakjee. He was also placed in an SACP technical committee with three other people. To give him a cover for his underground activities, Mac was employed to run *Sports Parade*, a fortnightly magazine owned by a sympathetic white comrade, Mannie Brown. This was an ideal cover for him to set up the Party propaganda machinery.

Kathy put Mac into contact with the Joseph brothers, Paul, Peter and Dasu, who provided him with invaluable support. Dasu arranged for a new identity for him, as Solly Matthews from Kimberley.

In 1962, Mac printed the speech Nelson Mandela gave during his trial for leaving the country illegally, and inciting workers to strike:

[W]e printed the speech as a pamphlet – a huge run. It took us about five days and nights of printing ... But I didn't have enough people to collate and staple the pamphlets on time, so it was arranged for the Naidoo household and the house next door to them ... to allow a period of time in which anonymous people would deliver suitcases full of pamphlets. It was then the Naidoo's job ... to collate and staple them – without leaving fingerprints. Now ... I was a boarder at the Naidoo house, and I was the one who would deliver those suitcases of stuff and then disappeared! (O' Malley 2007:107)

Thereafter Mac was put on the Party Propaganda Committee with Ruth First, Duma Nokwe and Dan Tloome. This was Mac's core activity at the time. His contacts with various activists increased, including Ameen Cajee or "Doha" as everyone knew him, and with whom Mac started working closely. (O' Malley 2007:108)

It was during this time that Mac got in touch with Wilton Mkwayi through Ruth First. He was then asked by them to make contact with Nandha "Steve" Naidoo, and then later to come up with a cover for him. Mac arranged for him to become an article clerk for JN Singh in Durban.

I ACCUSE !

**SPEECHES TO COURT
BY NELSON MANDELA**



**WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED PLEASE
PASS IT ON**

Cover of Mandela's speech, probably printed by Mac

Mac describes his formal integration into MK: "After the Rivonia arrests, Ruth took steps to integrate me formally into MK. I was rendering assistance to MK without belonging to an MK unit." (O' Malley 2007:110) Mac was called upon to help with reassembling weapons, and securing various ingredients for the making of bombs. One incident he recounts was about the scarcity of saltpetre, an essential ingredient for making pipe bombs. Mac investigated, and found out from an encyclopaedia that it is used for fertilising roses:

I put on a gardener's overall and went around enquiring at flower shops as discreetly as possible. I was able to buy stocks of it from shops selling garden fertilisers. I would go there a very expert gardener on roses, engage in discussion with the shop owners, and display my so-called knowledge about rose gardening. The chap would be very impressed and say, "You know a lot about roses." We'd get around to talking about various fertilisers, and I would reject some and say, "That one I know; it doesn't really work so well; it really depends on the soil." Then he would say at some point, "And saltpeter is something that you might consider using." (O' Malley 2007:111)

Also during this period, Mac was asked to serve on the Central Committee of the South African Community Party. The Party, after the Rivonia arrests, could not determine what the effect of MK activities on the Rivonia Trial would be, and placed a moratorium on all sabotage activities until the sentencing on 12 June 1964. In the meantime, Wilton Mkwayi was tasked with regrouping the MK High Command following the arrests and the Rivonia Trial.

He approached Mac to serve on the High Command as a political commissar but Mac declined, stating that he needed to be part of an MK unit to gain experience before he could

serve on the national structure. Mac consequently joined a unit and they placed about three pipe bombs. Mac found the experience "very normal"! (O' Malley 2007:115) But he and Mkwayi made tons of bombs, which Mkwayi would deliver to the units that needed them. Mac relates the story of bomb making with Ameen "Doha" Cajee, manufacturing gunpowder:

So we made gunpowder, which has to dry very slowly. I couldn't afford to leave this stuff sitting around for days, so I said, "Let's speed it up; let's heat it a little more just a little more," to take the moisture out – and then it blew up. The whole floor was littered. Doha got showered with the stuff – all over him! He was burning alive. He had to get treatment right away." (O' Malley 2007:116)

Fortunately Dr Essop Jassat was on standby as the "MK doctor", and successfully treated Doha, whose face and hands had to be bandaged.

Late in June 1964 Mac returned to Durban to fetch his wife, Tim. En route they decided to visit his parents at their home in Newcastle. During the visit they read about the arrest of several people such as Bram Fischer, Piet Beyleveld, and David Kitson. They immediately rushed back to Johannesburg that evening, and the following day they were arrested.

Mac was severely tortured, and eventually brought to trial in what became known as the Little Rivonia Trial. He was charged with four counts of sabotage under the Sabotage Act and the Unlawful Organisations Act with Wilton Mkwayi, Ian David Kitson, Laloo Chiba, and John Edward Matthews. Their arrests effectively destroyed the second National High Command of MK. They were found guilty and Mac was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment, which he served out on Robben Island.

No 5

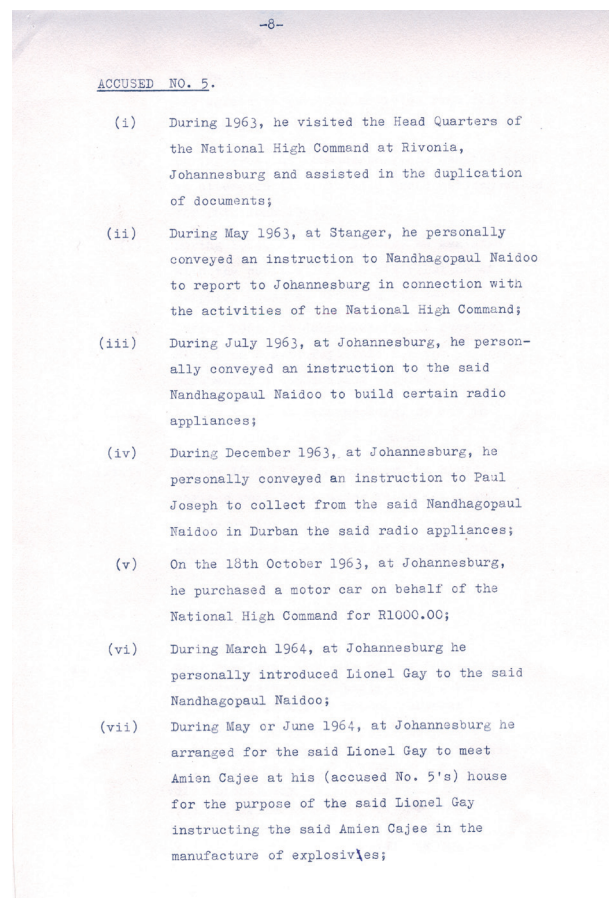
LIST OF EXHIBITS - DOCUMENTARY			
NO.	DESCRIPTION OF EXHIBITS	WHERE FOUND	WHEN FOUND
SM 1.	Typed document - name Nelson Mandela on it	21 Pearce St., Doornfontein	6.7.64
2.	Two booklets - March & April 1964 "Comment"	"	"
3.	Booklets - "Marxism Today" - April 1964	"	"
4.	5 Page hand printed document: "312 Years of Oppression and Persecution"	"	"
5.	Cutting "Rand Daily Mail" April 21, 1964 "My Fight is for all" Mandela tells court	"	"
6.	Wax sheet with list of names and addresses	"	"
7.	Two envelopes addressed to Miss. E. Masher	"	"
8.	8 Page written name list	"	"
9.	Cash sale invoice No.18669 (Transvaal Gate & Wire Works	"	7.7.1964
10.	Cash sale invoice No.18579 (" "	"	"
11	Invoice No.C.00251-20 (Majestic Building Materials (1961)(Pty) Ltd., and invoice No. 965 (same firm)	"	"
12.	Cash sale slip (Stans Hardware Supplies)	"	"
13.	3 Cash sale slips Nos. 00119-2;00277-27 and 00118-40 (O.F.S. Building Material Co)	"	"
14.	Envelope and letter addressed to Eddie Jacobs, Box 246, Fordsburg	"	"
15.	Post card addressed to T. Oosthuizen	"	"
16.	Registered slips six	"	"
17.	Declaration of Insurance TJ 62199	"	6.7.1964
18.	One identity card in name of Hafeez Rahim	"	"

A list of documents found at Mac's place, 21 Pierce Street, Doornfontein used in the "Little Rivonia Trial". Mac was accused No.5

On the island, Mac was incarcerated in the single cells section where the Rivonia trialists were kept. He developed very close relationships with Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela and Ahmed Kathrada. Mandela used to call him "Neef" and he in turn called him "Oom". In 1975, Kathy came up with the idea that Mandela should write his autobiography, which would be smuggled when Mac was released a year later, and it would be published to coincide with Mandela's 60th birthday in 1978 (O' Malley 2007:177). Mac's job was to transcribe the manuscript into very small print, so that it could be concealed and smuggled out when he left. He describes the process:

Every evening I would set about minitiarising the text. I used a ball-point pen and pieces of A4 paper, full pages, both sides. I wrote out the text, leaving a one-centimeter margin around the lines so I could cut it into strips for concealment. I could reduce probably eight, ten pages onto one side. My writing was very small. But while I was transcribing, I was also writing down questions. After I'd done that, I would take Madiba's original and pass it on to Kathy. I would conceal the copy I had made so that if the prison authorities stumbled onto what Madiba was writing, I had a copy. Kathy would read it and note his own queries. Then he would give it to Walter, who added more questions (O' Malley 2007:177-8).

Eventually, the manuscript was completed and Mac successfully took it out with him when he was released on 17 December 1976. Mac was immediately placed under house arrest. The autobiography, unfortunately and for various reasons, was not published as anticipated. It however formed the basis for Mandela's autobiography "Long Walk To Freedom", which was published in 1994. By July 1977 Mac fled the country, going into exile.

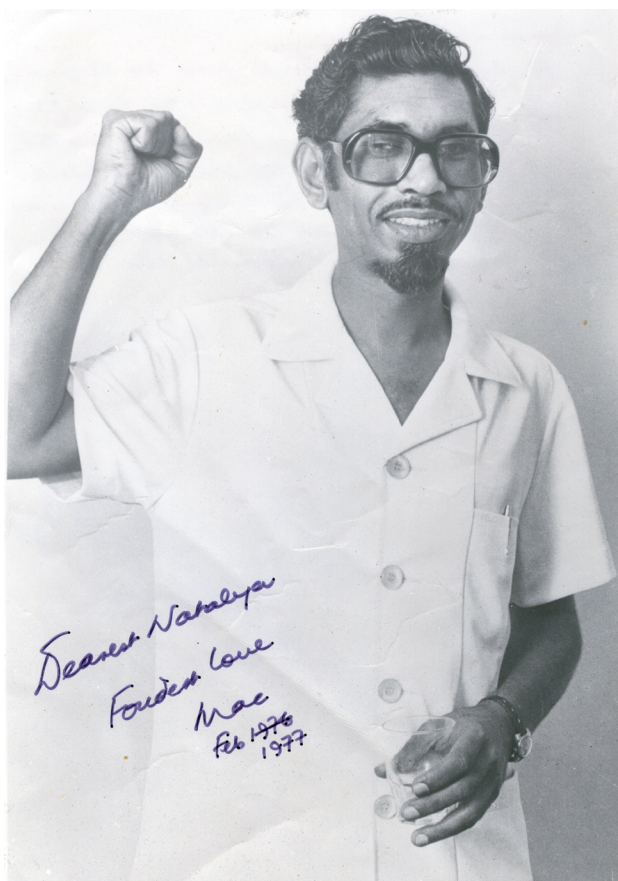


Part of the charge sheet against Mac "Accused No.5" in the case State vs Mkwazi and others

In 1978, Mac and Tim divorced. In the twenty years of their marriage they had spent very little time together. Soon thereafter Mac met Zarina Carrim, and they married in 1981. Mac and Zarina's son Amilcar was born in 1982, and their daughter Sekai-Jo in 1984.

Mac was deployed by the ANC in Lusaka. His abilities, his dedication, commitment and courage saw him rise rapidly in the ranks of the ANC. And at the ANC National Conference in Kabwe, Zambia, in 1985 Mac was elected to its national executive committee. Together with Aziz Pahad, Joe Slovo, Ronnie Kasrils, James Stuart and Reg September, they became the first non-Africans elected onto the NEC of the ANC.

2/23/62, 2/24/62, 2/25/62, 2/26/62, 2/27/62, 2/28/62, 3/1/62, 3/2/62, 3/3/62, 3/4/62, 3/5/62, 3/6/62, 3/7/62, 3/8/62, 3/9/62, 3/10/62, 3/11/62, 3/12/62, 3/13/62, 3/14/62, 3/15/62, 3/16/62, 3/17/62, 3/18/62, 3/19/62, 3/20/62, 3/21/62, 3/22/62, 3/23/62, 3/24/62, 3/25/62, 3/26/62, 3/27/62, 3/28/62, 3/29/62, 3/30/62, 3/31/62, 4/1/62, 4/2/62, 4/3/62, 4/4/62, 4/5/62, 4/6/62, 4/7/62, 4/8/62, 4/9/62, 4/10/62, 4/11/62, 4/12/62, 4/13/62, 4/14/62, 4/15/62, 4/16/62, 4/17/62, 4/18/62, 4/19/62, 4/20/62, 4/21/62, 4/22/62, 4/23/62, 4/24/62, 4/25/62, 4/26/62, 4/27/62, 4/28/62, 4/29/62, 4/30/62, 5/1/62, 5/2/62, 5/3/62, 5/4/62, 5/5/62, 5/6/62, 5/7/62, 5/8/62, 5/9/62, 5/10/62, 5/11/62, 5/12/62, 5/13/62, 5/14/62, 5/15/62, 5/16/62, 5/17/62, 5/18/62, 5/19/62, 5/20/62, 5/21/62, 5/22/62, 5/23/62, 5/24/62, 5/25/62, 5/26/62, 5/27/62, 5/28/62, 5/29/62, 5/30/62, 5/31/62, 6/1/62, 6/2/62, 6/3/62, 6/4/62, 6/5/62, 6/6/62, 6/7/62, 6/8/62, 6/9/62, 6/10/62, 6/11/62, 6/12/62, 6/13/62, 6/14/62, 6/15/62, 6/16/62, 6/17/62, 6/18/62, 6/19/62, 6/20/62, 6/21/62, 6/22/62, 6/23/62, 6/24/62, 6/25/62, 6/26/62, 6/27/62, 6/28/62, 6/29/62, 6/30/62, 7/1/62, 7/2/62, 7/3/62, 7/4/62, 7/5/62, 7/6/62, 7/7/62, 7/8/62, 7/9/62, 7/10/62, 7/11/62, 7/12/62, 7/13/62, 7/14/62, 7/15/62, 7/16/62, 7/17/62, 7/18/62, 7/19/62, 7/20/62, 7/21/62, 7/22/62, 7/23/62, 7/24/62, 7/25/62, 7/26/62, 7/27/62, 7/28/62, 7/29/62, 7/30/62, 7/31/62, 8/1/62, 8/2/62, 8/3/62, 8/4/62, 8/5/62, 8/6/62, 8/7/62, 8/8/62, 8/9/62, 8/10/62, 8/11/62, 8/12/62, 8/13/62, 8/14/62, 8/15/62, 8/16/62, 8/17/62, 8/18/62, 8/19/62, 8/20/62, 8/21/62, 8/22/62, 8/23/62, 8/24/62, 8/25/62, 8/26/62, 8/27/62, 8/28/62, 8/29/62, 8/30/62, 8/31/62, 9/1/62, 9/2/62, 9/3/62, 9/4/62, 9/5/62, 9/6/62, 9/7/62, 9/8/62, 9/9/62, 9/10/62, 9/11/62, 9/12/62, 9/13/62, 9/14/62, 9/15/62, 9/16/62, 9/17/62, 9/18/62, 9/19/62, 9/20/62, 9/21/62, 9/22/62, 9/23/62, 9/24/62, 9/25/62, 9/26/62, 9/27/62, 9/28/62, 9/29/62, 9/30/62, 10/1/62, 10/2/62, 10/3/62, 10/4/62, 10/5/62, 10/6/62, 10/7/62, 10/8/62, 10/9/62, 10/10/62, 10/11/62, 10/12/62, 10/13/62, 10/14/62, 10/15/62, 10/16/62, 10/17/62, 10/18/62, 10/19/62, 10/20/62, 10/21/62, 10/22/62, 10/23/62, 10/24/62, 10/25/62, 10/26/62, 10/27/62, 10/28/62, 10/29/62, 10/30/62, 10/31/62, 11/1/62, 11/2/62, 11/3/62, 11/4/62, 11/5/62, 11/6/62, 11/7/62, 11/8/62, 11/9/62, 11/10/62, 11/11/62, 11/12/62, 11/13/62, 11/14/62, 11/15/62, 11/16/62, 11/17/62, 11/18/62, 11/19/62, 11/20/62, 11/21/62, 11/22/62, 11/23/62, 11/24/62, 11/25/62, 11/26/62, 11/27/62, 11/28/62, 11/29/62, 11/30/62, 12/1/62, 12/2/62, 12/3/62, 12/4/62, 12/5/62, 12/6/62, 12/7/62, 12/8/62, 12/9/62, 12/10/62, 12/11/62, 12/12/62, 12/13/62, 12/14/62, 12/15/62, 12/16/62, 12/17/62, 12/18/62, 12/19/62, 12/20/62, 12/21/62, 12/22/62, 12/23/62, 12/24/62, 12/25/62, 12/26/62, 12/27/62, 12/28/62, 12/29/62, 12/30/62, 12/31/62.



Mac inscribed this photo for Natalya, daughter of his friends Issy and Ramnie Dinat in 1977 in London, soon after he fled into exile

At the first legal national conference that the ANC held in South Africa since 1959, Mac was re-elected to the NEC of the ANC in July 1991. He was also nominated by the ANC to serve on the secretariat of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), which convened from 1991 to 1994. Mac was responsible, together the SA government representative Fanie van der Merwe, for the overall administrative and organisational running of CODESA. Mandela also deployed him behind the scenes as a troubleshooter, and he was a key advisor to Cyril Ramaphosa. (O' Malley 2007:392)

Mac served as Minister of Transport in Mandela's Cabinet from 1994 to 1999. The following year he retired from the NEC of the ANC and active politics. He turned his incredible skills to business, and became a non-executive director with First Rand. In 2009 Mac was appointed by President Jacob Zuma as his special envoy.



*Mac Maharaj at an ANC rally in Lenasia in
1993*

Wilton Mkwayi¹⁹



Zimasile Wilton Mkwayi was known by his clan name Mbona and by his nickname Bribri. He was born in the Middledrift area of the Eastern Cape on 17 December 1923, into a family of four brothers and three sisters.

He attended the Ngcamngeni Primary School and later went to work in Port Elizabeth, where he became an organiser for the African Textile Workers Union. Wilton also served as a treasurer of the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

During the 1952 Defiance Campaign, he joined the Volunteer Corps and was later active in the Campaign for the Congress of the People. He was arrested in 1956 and charged for treason with 155 other people from around the country.

He was among the last 30 in the Treason Trial. Ahmed Kathrada recalls Wilton's "escape":

On the eve of the State of Emergency Madiba learnt from his contact that we were to be arrested the next day. I went out to his house to get further information. He told me that the leadership had met after receiving the information. The decision was that Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Michael Harmel and a few senior leaders were to go underground, and the Treason Trialists were to go to the court as usual. When they reached Pretoria, the police arrested them. When Wilton stood in line to be arrested, the police refused to accept that he was a treason accused. He insisted he was.

The police then chased him away, warning him that if he persisted they would arrest him on some other charge. He then fled Basutoland. From there he went to London, and eventually he went to China with the first batch of MK trainees.

Wilton joined Umkhonto We Sizwe when it was formed in 1961. He was a member of a group sent to the People's Republic of China for military training under the leadership of Raymond Mhlaba. Others in the group were Andrew Mlangeni, Joe Gqabi, Patrick Mthembu and Steve Naidoo.



Wilton Mkwayi standing in the front right with his friends and comrades in the 1950s

Upon his return from China, he was based at MK's headquarters in Rivonia. When Raymond Mhlaba was arrested in June 1963, Wilton took over from him as MK's Commander-in-Chief and was responsible for re-constituting the National High Command, which had been smashed when the Rivonia arrests took place.

He continued to work underground until he was arrested in 1964. He was charged with four counts and stood trial with David Kitson, Laloo Chiba, John Matthews and Mac Maharaj in the trial, which became known as the "Little Rivonia Trial".

5/8/64
578
J. 22.
578

STRAATSE NO. 578
CRIMINAL CASE NO. 578
VAN OF 1964

IN DIE HOOFGERECHTSHOF VAN SUID-AFRIKA
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Die Staat
The State

VERSUS

(i) WILTON MKWAYI
(ii) IAN DAVID KITSON
(iii) LALOO CHIBA
(iv) JOHN EDWARD MATTHEWS
(v) SATHANDRANATH RAGUNAN MAHARAJ

BEKLAGDE VAN DIE MISDAAD VAN
CHARGED WITH THE CRIME OF

SABOTAGE

JOHANNESBURG 1964 November 1964
day of 1964

voor Sy Edele Regter,
before the Honorable Mr. Justice

Mr. BIZOS
Mr. BIZOS
Mr. BIZOS
Mr. BIZOS
Mr. BIZOS

MASTERS, SA 1. TUCKER
No. 1, 2, 4 & 5
No. 1, 2, 4 & 5
No. 1, 2, 4 & 5
No. 1, 2, 4 & 5
No. 1, 2, 4 & 5

Verdict
Sentence

No. 1 - Life imprisonment
No. 2 - Twenty (20) years imprisonment
No. 3 - Fifteen (15) years imprisonment
No. 4 - Fifteen (15) years imprisonment
No. 5 - Twelve (12) years imprisonment

The file cover of the trial State vs Mkwayi and others

He was found guilty on all four counts and was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. He fought for his right to marry Irene Khumalo. Eventually, permission was granted and he married her from prison in 1985. Unfortunately, Irene died just three years later.

Wilton was released from prison along with the Rivonia trialists in October 1989. He was awarded the highest honour of the ANC, the Isithwalandwe award, when he was released. He was elected onto the National Executive Committee at the ANC's 1991 National Conference and served until the ANC's National Conference in Mafikeng in 1997.

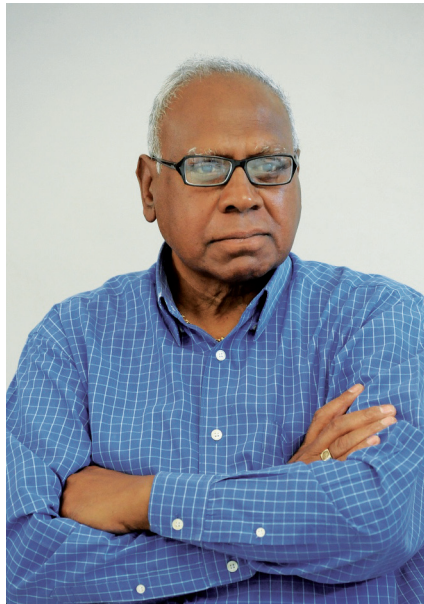
He was elected as a member of the Senate in the National Parliament in 1994; then deployed to the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, where he served until his retirement from public life in 1999. He was appointed as a member of the Eastern Cape Provincial Disciplinary Committee and served as a member of MK's Military Veteran's Association.

He married Patricia Long in 1996. He passed away on 23 July 2004 at the age of 81 and was honoured by the state with a special official funeral on 31 July 2004.



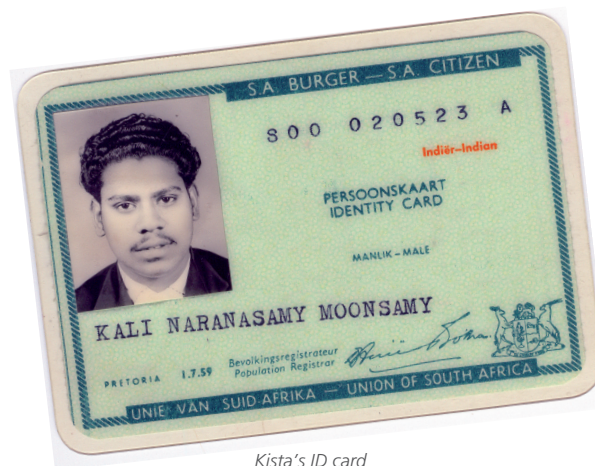
Press conference held in Soweto soon after the release of Ahmed Kathrada, Elias Motsoaledi, Wilton Mkwayi, and others in October 1989

Kista Moonsamy²⁰



Today Kista Moonsamy (also known as Kista Phillips) is a respected local leader in social, community and religious organisations. He wistfully recalls the hurly burly days of being a TIYC activist, union organiser and Umkhonto we Sizwe saboteur.

Kista was born on 8 July 1937 and named Kali-Naransamy Moonsamy. He was the youngest of four siblings. At a young age his parents opted to move from Vrededorp to Fordsburg. Kista recalls that his father, who worked as a caterer, passed away at an early age and, having only finished standard five, Kista had to seek employment.

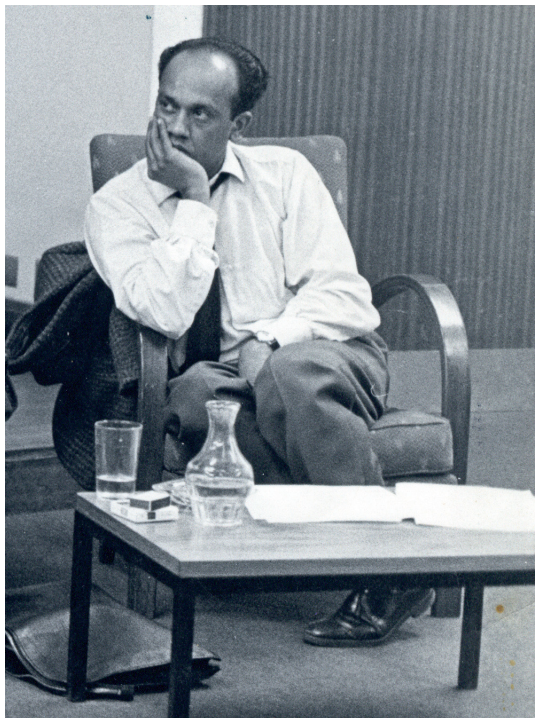


Kista's ID card

Passionate about woodwork, and skilful as well, he sought employment as a cabinetmaker. After applying at numerous firms, Kista discovered that, due to the apartheid policy of job reservation, no company would extend him an apprenticeship. This was one of Kista's first conscious encounters with institutionalised discrimination.

A friend of Kista's assisted him by offering him a job as a pageboy at a Hillbrow hotel. From that point on Kista spent most of his adult life in the catering industry and at various times has been a waiter, wine steward and caterer. Kista's leadership skills and commitment to fair labour practice resulted in his serving a number of terms on the executive of the Witwatersrand Catering Employees Union and as secretary of the Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Football Association.

Kista contends that, with Reggie Vandeyar as his childhood friend and Paul Joseph as a neighbour, it was inevitable that he would get involved in political activity from an early age.



Paul Joseph in exile in London, c1970s

He clearly recalls that, from about the age of 16, Paul Joseph would talk politics and provide him with political reading material. Kista also has vivid memories of having to sell *the Guardian* and, after it was banned, *the Spark* and *New Age* newspapers.

Kista joined the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC) and was elected onto the executive under the leadership of Moosa "Mosie" Moolla. He said they would often receive advice and guidance from senior comrades such as Naransamy (Roy) Naidoo and Mervy Thandray.

During his tenure on the executive, Kista recalls that the TIYC often held rallies and did door-to-door campaigning to promote various Congress-initiated campaigns such as the Potato Boycott and May Day stayaways.

Kista can remember a time when he and a few comrades drove to Lenasia to canvass door-to-door for a stayaway. In the early hours of the day of the stayaway they were informed that the police were on their way to Lenasia to look for the activists. Kista decided they should travel to Fordsburg via Soweto. Having reached Soweto, people there assumed that they were on their way to work and their car was stoned. Forced to backtrack, they had to travel home via the Vaal.

Kista says he often spent nights watching over the belongings of victims of evictions. These belongings, generally strewn over the pavement, were normally the only possessions of poor people who contravened the Group Areas Act.

Kista recalls being fired from work because he encouraged other workers not to work on May Day. Reggie Vandeyar, a co-worker, intervened and argued that all those who stayed

away should be dismissed and that it was unfair to single Kista out. He was reinstated on condition that he refrains from organising at work – a condition he had no intention of honouring.

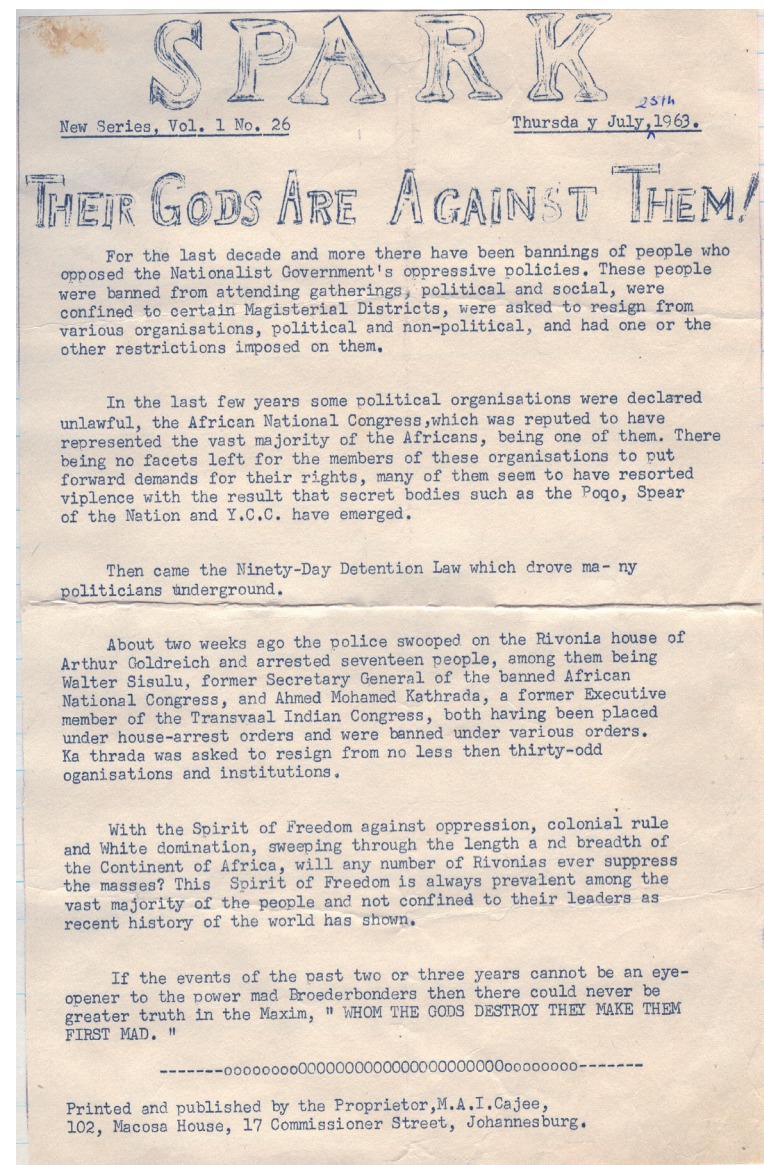
On 16 December 1961 Kista heard loud noises, the sound of explosions, which he dismissed as traditional festive season fireworks. The next day, a Sunday, he learnt of the birth of Umkhonto we Sizwe. He remembers doing a tour of the sites bombed the night before and recounts the excitement and inspiration he felt.

In 1963 Laloo “Isu” Chiba informed Kista that MK had been observing and screening him and wanted him to become an operative. Kista indicated that he was willing and enthusiastic to join MK.

The first act of sabotage that Kista participated in was the blowing up of a signal box at the New Canada train station. This operation was led by Isu and consisted of Solly Vania, Faker Salie and Kista. Isu’s role in this particular act was to demonstrate to them the process of planting and priming a bomb.

After the success of the New Canada operation, Isu approached Kista to head the MK unit in which Magan, Nanoo and Joe Cajee would be the other members. Kista says that, having sent his wife and mother to a movie, Isu came to his house to show him how to make a pipe bomb.

Kista maintains that the pipe bomb was an inferior and dangerous explosive when compared to dynamite, but due to a lack of resources they were compelled to use this variety.



The Newsletter Spark kept the people informed about events during the repressive era of the sixties

Operationally it was the onus and responsibility of the unit to identify targets. Once a target was identified, permission was sought from the Regional Command. Kista's unit had identified a post office as a possible target for bombing. They reported to Isu that they had studied the target and felt that the unit could successfully blow it up. A few days later Isu informed the unit that, after examining the target, he noticed that the postmaster lived above the post office and therefore it was not possible to bomb the site.

On a particularly cold night, 14 June 1964, the four members of Kista's unit intended to bomb the 11th Street Post Office in Fietas. Having reconnoitred the area, the unit had worked out where they would place the bomb as well as their route of escape. Kista, as unit leader, was tasked with the placing of the explosive. Kista instructed Nanoo and Joe to act as lookouts while Magan assisted him in priming the already manufactured pipe bomb. Sulphuric acid, which acts as a detonator of the pipe bomb, was accidentally spilt onto Kista and outside the capsule he was filling. The acid was eating Kista's clothes and he had no idea how long they had before the bomb would explode. He nonetheless took the decision to continue with the operation.

As he approached the post office, Kista noticed a woman entering the public phone booth at the entrance to the post office. Fortunately she did not linger and left almost immediately. Kista recalls that after placing the bomb, he was a few metres away when it exploded. Making his way home to Fordsburg, via De La Rey Street, a number of people who had heard the explosion were rushing in the opposite direction.

A soccer player Kista knew, a man called Ati, saw Kista and asked him if he knew what the noise was all about. Kista

pleaded ignorance and went on his way. Upon reaching home Kista realised how badly the sulphuric acid had burnt his clothes and his wife, Rosie, helped him to undress and burn the clothes.

The next morning Kista noticed Ati walking up and down the street he lived on. Fearing that Ati was observing his house to inform the police, Kista expected the worst. A few days later he learnt to his relief that Ati's girlfriend worked at a clothing factory down his road.

When MK was launched on 16 December 1961, an MK unit led by Wolfie Kodesh – which included Isu Chiba, Paul Joseph and Reggie Vandeyar – had bombed the Fordsburg Central Rd Post Office. Later, an operation led by Solly Vania sought to target the same facility and included Kista, Bobby Vassen and Magan Narsee. The unit was supplied with gelignite as the explosive.

Kista recalls that he went into a nearby phone booth, lit the gelignite and placed it in the previously identified area. Kista then proceeded to Main Rd in Fordsburg and waited for the explosion. After a short while he realised something had gone wrong. He was loath to waste the precious resource, so he returned to the scene to investigate²¹. This was contrary to MK standing orders. Kista relit the gelignite and returned to Main Rd. It failed to explode and he returned a third time. It was then that Kista noticed an increased police presence in the area and he decided to abandon the gelignite.

Solly's unit began to reconnoitre the Witspos site, a post office sorting and clearing warehouse. When they reported their findings to Isu they were told to hold off on all activities until further notice.

Soon thereafter disaster struck – Isu was arrested. Paul Joseph approached Kista and ordered him to disband his unit. At 10pm on a Sunday Peter Moonsammy came to him and advised him to leave home immediately. Peter intimated that his brother Paul, who was in prison, had alluded that Kista was in danger.

Kista was sent to a cottage in Malay Camp where he met Issy Dinath, who was also in hiding. A few days later Peter visited Kista to inform him that he would be sent for military training in Czechoslovakia.

With Tommy Vassen and Herby Pillay as company, Kista was driven to, he assumes, the Botswana border. Along the way the driver was flagged down and they were all told to turn around due to high security activity taking place at the border post.

On New Year's Eve in 1965 Kista received a call from Peter telling him it was safe to return home.

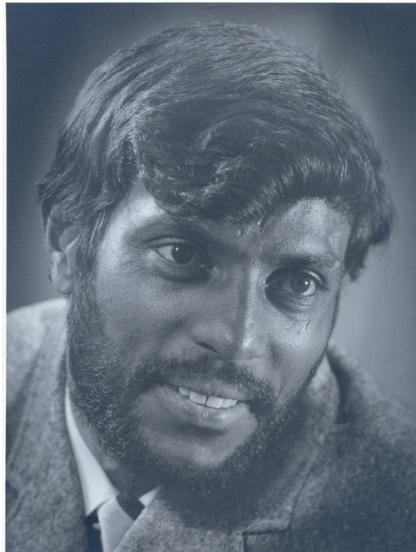
Upon his return Kista found that most of his comrades were either in jail or in exile. In 1969 he and his family moved to Lenasia and in the 1980s Kista became active in the Federation of Residents Associations as well as the Transvaal Indian Congress. In the years that followed, Kista ran the Community Advice Centre in Lenasia, became a councillor in the City of Johannesburg and was employed by the ANC Johannesburg Region. He subsequently retired.

Kista married Esther Rose van Wyk, known affectionately as Rosie, in 1957. They had five children. Rosie passed away on 5 January 2006. Kista remarried Valasunthree on 8 July 2008.



Kista and Rosie Moonsamy

Indres Naidoo²²



Indres Naidoo was born at Rugby Terrace, 18a Rockey Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, on 26 August 1936. He was born into a family deeply involved in South African resistance politics. His grandfather, Thambi Naidoo, was a contemporary of Gandhi, and was an active organiser of the passive resistance or satyagraha campaigns waged under Gandhi's leadership. Indres's father, Naransamy "Roy" Naidoo, together with his three brothers, went to India with Gandhi in 1914, to further his education, and studied under the famous Indian poet and writer Rabindranath Tagore.

Upon his return to South Africa, the elder Naidoo immersed himself in resistance politics, and was a staunch supporter of Dr Yusuf Dadoo. Indres's mother, Mrs Manomoney "Ama" Naidoo was also active, courting arrest in the 1946 and 1952 campaigns, and was one of the 20 000 women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 to protest against the extension of the pass laws to women.

Indres's two sisters (Shanti and Ramnie) and two brothers (Murthi and Prema), his uncles and aunts, his cousins, nieces and nephews were all involved in the struggle against apartheid in one way or another. Between them, they faced police harassment, detention, banning, exile, house arrest and jail. Mrs Thayanagie Pillay, Roy's sister, was briefly detained for protesting against the tricameral parliament system in the 1980s when she was already in her eighties.



Picture sent to Indres while he was on Robben Island:
L-R: Ramnie, Ama (mother), Murthi, Shanti and Prema

The Naidoo home in Doornfontein was frequented by the prominent anti-apartheid leaders and activists of the time, and the young Indres was simultaneously awed and inspired as he listened to all the discussions taking place. His political activism was inevitable, and Indres recalls that “when I was a little boy, I used to walk down the streets of Johannesburg with my father, shouting: “Long live Congress, down with the Nationalist Party, down with General Smuts” (Indres Naidoo interview, 3/10/2000:6). When he was ten years old, he started selling the progressive newspapers of the time, such as *the Guardian*, *Liberation*, *Fighting Talk* and *Passive Resister*. He also joined the Young Pioneers, the children’s organisation linked to the Communist Party.

Being too young to become a volunteer in the Defiance Campaign of 1952, Indres played his part by helping to



Natalya Dinat, Indres’s niece, attended the ANC’s Consultative conference in 1985 held in Kabwe, Zambia



Indres Naidoo as a young boy

distribute leaflets. By about 1953/54, he was elected onto the executives of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and the South African Peace Council. So it was during the run-up to the Congress of the People that Indres's participation intensified.

We, as young people, used to go out to the countryside to Barberton, to Middelburg, to Brits, to canvass to get people's opinions of what they wanted in the Charter, and for six months we worked continuously, every weekend. We covered virtually the entire Transvaal" (Indres Naidoo interview, 3/10/2000:13).

The week leading up to the Congress of the People saw a flurry of activity, which Indres remembers as working almost non-stop (Indres Naidoo Interview 3/10/2009:14). He then participated in the Million Signature Campaign, trying to get a million people to sign up in support of the Freedom Charter, which was drafted at the Congress of The People.

Indres relates how he assisted with the Women's March to the Union Buildings in 1956:



Women gathering to march onto the Union Buildings in 1956

I was part of a reception group; our task was to receive the delegations from all over the country ... women started coming in by the hundreds from all over, from Transkei, from Ciskei, from Pondoland ... ja, the women were coming in from all over, it was incredible and our task was to ... first of all we started making sandwiches and, man, we made sandwiches and sandwiches and sandwiches. We were making coffee and tea for the women as they were coming and as they were coming in we were sending them off to the various accommodations and, you know, in those days there were no hotels and no accommodation for black people, so it was a question of sending them to various homes ... (Indres Naidoo interview, 3/10/2000:23-4).

Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada recalls that delegates from outside of Johannesburg were told to report to Flat 13, Kholved House (Kathy's flat) where they were given refreshments and directed to their accommodation.

Reacting to the mounting resistance, the apartheid government arrested 156 leaders and charged them for treason in December 1956. Indres was part of the support network looking after the needs of the trialists and their families. By 1960, Indres had joined the underground South African Communist Party, and was recruited into MK soon after its formation in 1961.

The MK unit consisted of Reggie Vandeyar, Shirish Nanabhai and Indres. At some point, the need to get hold of dynamite became quite urgent, and a fourth member, Gammat Jardine, joined the unit. Gammat procured a box of dynamite, with promises of more to come. The unit were suspicious of him, and were reluctant to include him. However, members of the

Regional Command of MK were most anxious to procure more dynamite, vetted Jardine, and he joined the unit as the fourth member.

Indres recalls that they were amateurs, with very little basic training. Their first act of sabotage was a failure, as the dynamite did not go off. They learnt rapidly by reading extensively about explosives, but had very few opportunities for training and experimentation (Indres Naidoo interview, 11/08/2009).

The incident where Reggie Vandeyar, Shirish Nanabhai and Indres were caught red-handed on 17 April 1963, while trying to bomb the signal relay-box at the Riverlea railway station, is described by Indres in his book *Island in Chains*. Gammat Jardine had sold them out and disappeared from the “scene of the crime”. During the trial the police said they had an anonymous tip-off and had 15 policemen surrounding the area. Indres was shot in the arm while trying to escape, and once arrested, they were all severely tortured. They were charged under the Sabotage Act on three counts, and convicted on 13 May 1963 by Mr Justice Bekker, the first to be convicted

Initials of Officer making entry and date.
Voorletters van beampte wat inskrywing maak en datum.

Date of discharge/Datum van ontslag
Appeal noted/Appel aangeteken
Alterations in sentence/Veranderings in vonnis

Checked by/Nagegaan deur
R.C.A./R.A.A. No. 270-4-1963 Case/Saak No. ce. 169/55-18903
Police Station/Polisiekantoor

In the Supreme Court of South Africa.
In die Hooggeregshof van Suid-Afrika.
(Witwatersrand - Local. DIVISION.)
-AFDELING.

To the Sheriff of the Province of Transvaal or
his lawful Deputy. GREETING.
WHEREAS at a Criminal Session of the Supreme Court of South Africa holden before me at Johannesburg.
on the 17th day of May in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty - Three
the undermentioned prisoner was duly convicted of the crime(s) undermentioned and was sentenced by the Judgment of the said Court to undergo the punishment(s) affixed to his (her) name in such place as may be prescribed by lawful authority:

Aan die Balju van die Provinsie of sy wettige Adjunk. SALUUT.
NADEMAAL by 'n strafsitting van die Hooggeregshof van Suid-Afrika gehou voor my te op die dag van in die Jaar van ons Here Eenduisend Negehonderd ondervermelde gevangene skuldig bevind is aan ondervermelde misdad/misdade en by vonnis van genoemde Hof veroordeel is om die straf (strawwe) by sy (haar) naam vermeld te ondergaan in sodanige plek as wat die wettige overheid mag voorskryf:

THIS IS THEREFORE to command you in the name of the State to keep and detain the said prisoner in your Custody until he (she) shall have suffered the said punishment, or be discharged therefrom according to law.

So DIEN DIT OM u te gelas om in die naam van die Staat genoemde gevangene in u bewaring te ontvang en te hou totdat hy (sy) genoemde straf ondergaan het of ooreenkomstig die wet daarvan onthef word.

Prisoner's Name. Naam van Gevangene.	Sentence. Straf.
Indres Naidoo.	10 (Ten) years imprisonment
Age/Ouderdom 25	
Nationality/Nasionaliteit. S. A.	
Race/Ras. Indian	
Sex/Geslag. Male	
Classification of crime/misdad. Klassifikasie van boete moet aangegee word. 13 MAY 1963 RECEPTION OFFICE JOHANNESBURG	
Of what Crime convicted. Aan watter misdad skuldig bevind.	Sabotage in contravention of Section 21(1) of Act 76/1962

FOR WHICH THIS SHALL BE YOUR WARRANT.
WAARVOOR DIT U LASTBRIEF IS.

Given under my hand, at Johannesburg, this day of May 1963, op hede die 13de

Registrar.
Griffier.
J. B. Bekker

Presiding Judge.
Voorsittende Regter.
S. B. M. M.

Indres Naidoo's warrant of committal

under the Sabotage Act. Each man was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment the following day, and they were part of the first batch of MK recruits to serve on Robben Island.

However, after the sentencing, they were to spend six months at Leeuwkop prison, while security police were investigating further charges. They wanted to know what had happened to the rest of the dynamite supplied by Gammat Jardine (Naidoo

1982:54-5). They were tortured, but denied any knowledge of the additional dynamite. So no further charges were brought against them.

Thereafter Indres, his co-accused and other prisoners were moved in four truckloads, leaving Leeuwkop at night. They were chained to each other and squashed in the trucks. It took two days and two nights to reach their destination – Robben Island.



Indres and his mother Ama Naidoo on the day of his release, 13 May 1973

Indres was to spend the next ten years in the general section of Robben Island. These were communal cells separated from the single cells in B section, which housed the Rivonia trialists.

In May 1973, Indres was released with his co-accused Reggie Vandeyar and Shirish Nanabhai, and immediately placed under house arrest. Johannesburg was changed from the one he left behind ten years before. There was a different culture; bell bottomed pants, long hair and beards were in fashion; there was a new highway and new cars were on

the roads. Politically things had also changed, and the Black Consciousness Movement, which did not exist in 1963, had firmly established itself in the struggle terrain. Indres said, "these were frightening times ... it was like waking up after a hundred years of sleep" (Naidoo 2000:268).

Soon thereafter, with Joe Gqabi, Henry Makgothi and others, he became active in ANC underground structures. He also helped found the Ahmed Timol Memorial Committee, which



Indres and his son Bram

later became the Human Rights Committee. The committee organised commemoration meetings and rallies, produced a newsletter, and generally kept the voice of the Congress Movement alive. Many of its meetings and publications were banned, and the security police constantly harassed committee members.

Indres married Saeeda Vally soon after his release. He needed to get special permission to enter the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court with three witnesses for his wedding because he was under house arrest. He also had to get special permission to go to Cape Town for his honeymoon. Indres's son Bram was born on 22 March 1975, and named after the late Bram Fischer.

When Joe Gqabi was arrested on New Year's day in 1977, he sent a message saying Indres had to leave the country. The following day, Indres was smuggled out of the country by Mohamed Ismail, better known as "Cha-cha". He was taken to the border with Swaziland, and told that after crossing three fences he would be in Swaziland. He had to make his own way to Mbabane where, when he arrived, Stanley Mabizela received him. After about a week, he was transferred to Mozambique.

Thus began a new chapter in Indres's life, that of exile. In Mozambique he was tasked with establishing the ANC underground and smuggling ANC literature into South Africa. In September 1977 Indres appeared before the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid to testify about prison conditions and torture meted out to political prisoners in South Africa. Indres also used the opportunity to highlight the many deaths of political activists in apartheid prisons and police cells. Thereafter he embarked on a speaking

tour, addressing rallies and meetings in the USA, Europe and Africa, speaking out against the atrocities of the apartheid government.

Indres's base however, was in Mozambique, and he continued establishing channels to smuggle literature and arms into South Africa. Because of the country's proximity to South Africa, there was the constant threat of attacks, both overt and covert, from apartheid security operatives. Indres and his fellow comrades had at all times to be on high alert to these dangers. In 1983, the South African Defence Force bombed three places in Matola and Maputo, killing one ANC cadre and four Mozambican civilians (Naidoo 2000: 275-6).

Indres's marriage also collapsed during this period under the strain of exile.

After the Nkomati Accord of 1984 between South Africa and Mozambique, ANC operatives were compelled to leave Mozambique. Many "disappeared" into the underground in Mozambique or moved to Swaziland, Angola, Zambia or Zimbabwe. Indres, however, remained in Maputo as part of a group of ten to staff the ANC diplomatic office. Nonetheless Indres, together with Jacob Zuma, Susan Rabkin, Mohamed Timol, Sonny Singh and Keith Mokoape, had to leave Mozambique in January 1987 in response to a demand from the South African government. It alleged that these six named ANC cadres were responsible for ninety-two percent of all "terror attacks" in South Africa (Naidoo 2000:279).

After spending about a year in Lusaka, Indres was appointed as the ANC Deputy Representative to the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Before taking up his post in Berlin, he decided to visit Maputo en route. While there, a car bomb placed



Albie Sachs

in Albie Sachs' car exploded and severely injured Albie. Sometime in 1988, Jacques Pauw, a journalist from the *Weekly Mail* informed Indres that according to a Civil Cooperation Bureau/military intelligence agent, Pieter Botes, he was the intended target of the bomb attack. This was confirmed a decade later when Henry van der Westhuizen applied for amnesty for the bombing of Albie, stating that the intended target was Indres. In 2001, van der Westhuizen was granted amnesty (AC/2001/257).

In Berlin, Indres immersed himself in his work, trying to forget the horror of the bomb blast, and addressed rallies all over the GDR. It was the first time that he drew a salary – from the GDR Solidarity Committee – and was not totally dependent on handouts and the ANC for his sustenance.

During one of these rallies he met Gabriele “Gabi” Blankenburg, who became his life partner. Gabi was active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the GDR. Gabi recalls that Indres was very traumatised by the incidents in Mozambique, that he had nightmares and would often wake up screaming. However, he was very focused and determined to continue the fight against apartheid (Gabriele Blankenburg interview, 11/08/2009). He found it very difficult to trust people, and it took some time before he could fully trust her.

In June 1988 Indres went to London to participate in the Nelson Mandela seventieth birthday celebrations. He attended the birthday tribute concert at Wembley, and then boarded the train to Glasgow to participate in the “Free Nelson Mandela Now” march. This was a thousand-mile march from Glasgow to London, undertaken by 25 people. The march started on the 24th anniversary of the Rivonia trialists' sentencing on 12 June and ended 36 days later at Hyde Park.

A year after returning to Berlin, the Berlin Wall – which divided Berlin into zones in East and West Germany – was destroyed by the people of the GDR. Soon thereafter the GDR itself collapsed. As a consequence, the round the clock protection that Indres received fell away. Soon thereafter, various attempts were made on Indres's life (Gabriele Blankenburg interview, 11/08/2009).

In 1990, Indres was in Stockholm, Sweden on a visit with the ANC leadership when he heard the news of the unbanning of the ANC and the SACP, and the imminent release of Nelson Mandela. In April 1991, Indres returned to South Africa with his sister Shanti, who had been in exile in London since 1972. Once again, he was confronted by a changed and strange South

Africa after a 14-year absence. Gabi came to South Africa the following year and they settled down in a flat in Yeoville.

On his return, Indres was employed by the SACP, and one of his main responsibilities was the distribution of the *African Communist*. He also assisted in the preparations for the first public rally of the SACP to be held legally in South Africa in July 1990. In addition, Indres participated in various ANC campaigns and activities.

Indres was elated at being able to vote on 27 April 1994. He recalls:

Standing for hours in that very long queue in Yeoville, Johannesburg, I waited to enter the polling booth for the first time in the 58 years of my life. When at long last the moment came, I was very nervous. I could not believe that the time had finally come, the time to put my X on the ballot papers. (Naidoo 2000:290)

The ANC won the election by a landslide victory. Indres was on the ANC list to Parliament, and after the election victory party, Indres and Gabi departed for Cape Town. Indres was sworn in as a Senator for Gauteng. He held this position until he retired in 1999 and continues to live in Cape Town.



Naidoo family get together, including Shirish Nanabhai and his son Kamal, early 1990s

Shirish Nanabhai²³



Jasmath Nanabhai, Shirish J Nanabhai's father, was born on 17 February 1907 in the village of Karadi/Matvad in the district of Navsari in Gujarat, India.

Jasmath immigrated to South Africa after the turn of the last century. Shirish was born on 1 March 1938 at 51 Commercial Rd, Fordsburg. There were eight siblings in his family – six brothers and two sisters.

In a way, it was inevitable that Shirish would get involved in politics because Jasmath was active during his youth in the Indian National Congress, which had fought against British rule in India. Jasmath inculcated the spirit of revolution in his children.

I remember my father telling me how they would use empty coconut shells to create petrol bombs. Not only did the shells make excellent receptacles, they were easily camouflaged because coconuts are widely used by Hindus for religious rituals.

Upon arrival in South Africa, Jasmath settled in Boksburg and was employed as a "duster boy" by a silk merchant on the East Rand. While his duties at this establishment were merely to ensure that the silk was kept clean and dusted, his business acumen led him to learn the trade and become a buyer for the company. This eventually led to a trip to Japan and, over time, he learnt bookkeeping at the same company.

By the time Shirish was born the family had moved to a flat in Fordsburg. The famous “Red Square” in Fordsburg – the site on which the Oriental Plaza was later built – was an open space that served as a venue for public meetings and a rallying point for the movement.

The Red Square was also the site of Shirish’s first arrest in 1955 at the age of 17. He was arrested by the police for chalking a political symbol on a wall in the square. “I was kept for two hours, given a smack and told to go home.” While a lenient punishment, the experience would make real

his father’s refrain that political activism, however noble and just, carried with it real consequences that one should be prepared to bear.

Shirish joined the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress when he was a teenager in the mid-1950s. He remembers a social trip to Cape Town organised by the TIYC in 1955 with Moosa “Mosie” Moolla, Suliman “Solly” Essakjee, Farid Adams, Indres Naidoo, and Peter Joseph. He was elected to the executive of the TIYC in 1956.



TIYC Annual Conference, 26 August 1962 held at the Duncan Hall, Johannesburg: L-R: Indres Naidoo, Shirish Nanabhai, Mosie Moolla, Winnie Mandela, Barry Higgs and Khalil Saloojee



*A trip to Cape Town organised by the TIYC. Essop Jassat is standing left back.
Seated are Mosie Moolla and Babla Saloojee*

In 1957, he spent a year in London, England studying at the College of Aeronautical Engineering and returned a year later. He then immersed himself in political work, distributing leaflets and putting up posters for political campaigns. When the State of Emergency was declared in 1960 and many comrades were detained, Shirish remembers the invaluable role that the local community played. He was responsible for collecting food from Mrs Bhayat and Mrs Pahad and delivering it to the detainees.

His task was short lived because he was also detained a month after the emergency was declared. He comforted himself with the thought that many old friends and comrades who were

also detained would also be at the prison, but when he got to the Fort, he quickly learnt that the detainees had been transferred to Pretoria. He would spend several months in isolation, confined to a cell where the screams of prisoners being whipped were his only accompaniment.

During this time, black warders would sometimes slip him a daily newspaper or medical officers would insist that the prison authorities allow him time in the prison courtyard.

Shirish remembers driving Joe Matthews – a leading member of the ANC and SACP – with Suliman “Babla” Saloojee to the Bechuanaland border to help get Joe out of the country in the early 1960s.

Reggie Vandeyar approached Shirish in December 1962 to become a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). He received basic training in explosives and was instructed to scout for potential targets. During this same period, he held a job as a clerk at S Malk, a clothing and general merchandise store in Johannesburg. During lunchtimes, he would engage in political activity or meet on street corners to plan operations with members of his unit.

One afternoon, I returned to the shop after a protest was held on the City Hall steps. During a confrontation, I managed to get a blue eye. When I returned to work, the owner of the company noticed it and brought me a piece of steak to reduce the swelling.

Just five months after he joined MK, he was arrested with his unit leader Reggie Vandeyar and comrade Indres Naidoo. They were caught in the act of planting and detonating explosives at a railway signal box in Riverlea. The fourth member of their unit, the police informer Gammat Jardine, betrayed them.

FIRST TRANSVAAL SENTENCE

10 years' jail for three saboteurs

REGGIE VANDEYAR, Shirish Nanabhai and Indres Naidoo, the first men convicted under the Sabotage Act in the Transvaal, were each sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment by Mr. Justice Bekker in a packed court at the Rand Criminal Sessions this afternoon.

The judge said before passing sentence: "An act of sabotage as a protest is in my opinion futile and stupid and achieves nothing. As a crime it is a dangerous and serious offence."

The three men pleaded guilty on Friday to entering railway property, blowing up a toolshed and trying to blow up a signal relay case near Crown Station after midnight on April 17.

SENSE OF SAFETY

"If you wish to protest against the Government it appears to me that this is not the way to do so. The public of South Africa, including members of your own organization, the Indian Youth Congress, are entitled to board trains with a sense of safety they have so far enjoyed and become accustomed to."

The fact that you selected as your target this vital undertaking conducted for the benefit of the public at large and that you used this dangerous substance, dynamite, are features which aggravate this already serious offence.

SERIOUS LIGHT

"Furthermore, the sentence must take into account the very serious light in which sabotage is regarded in the courts of law."

As they left the dock the three men smiled, waved to relatives and friends, and gave a clenched-fist salute.

The official benches were filled with senior officers and detectives. Armed constables guarded every one of the five entrances to the court.

ALLEGATIONS

The judge said he did not agree with the State submission that the attack launched by the accused against the police based on alleged severe assaults in custody was calculated to bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

The allegations were therefore not an aggravating feature of the offence.

The judge did not regard the matter as relevant, even if there was no justification for the allegations.

"Whether relevant or not, I decided to listen to this evidence

Armed police called out

ABOUT 200 non-Whites demonstrated outside the Supreme Court after the three Indians were sentenced. The crowd were waiting for them to be removed in a prison van, and the police called in two truckloads of armed men.

The crowd shouted slogans and wished the three men good luck and said, "Don't worry. It'll be all right."

The demonstration was orderly.

since it is very much in the interests of justice that the Court should know of treatment meted out to arrested persons.

COMMON CAUSE

"If there were unjustified assaults meted out it would be necessary for this Court to take steps to see that wrong-doers meet their dues."

It was common cause that Vandeyar and Naidoo were severely injured, and that Nanabhai had facial injuries. Highly qualified medical men had said the injuries could have been received in the course of arrest.

The judge thought it unlikely that the three accused received injuries at the time and in the manner testified to by them.

DEFIANCE

"Parliament, in placing this Act on the Statute Book in an endeavour to deter people from committing acts of sabotage has provided a minimum of five years' imprisonment, a maximum sentence of death."

"Despite these provisions and in defiance of them, you three decided to blow up the toolshed and the signal box. Defiance, counsel urged that you were victims of an agent provocateur, Gammat Jardine."

"For purposes of sentence I will assume that Gammat Jardine played some role that over a period of time he suggested that passive resistance was useless and urged acts of sabotage. Even at the risk of doing the State an injustice, I shall assume these things."

NEUTRALIZED

"Nevertheless the decision to fall in with the suggestion was taken by you yourselves. You desire to bring home a protest against the laws of the Government. In my opinion this neutralizes to some extent the mitigating features."

The evidence showed that on the section of line between Crown Station and New Canada Station there were four tracks carrying 178,000 passengers every 24 hours.

The judge was prepared to accept the three men did not intend to endanger lives. If that had been their intention, they would have directed their efforts at the tracks.

SIX ACTS

The unchallenged evidence of the State showed that if some of the debris from the toolshed had fallen on the line the possibility of derailment could not be excluded.

Apart from 23 acts of sabotage not on railway properties since 1961, the evidence showed that since the Sabotage Act no less than six acts of sabotage had occurred on railway property.

The court was told there were six cases of sabotage on railway property on the Rand from September 29 last to April 17 last involving damage of R42,000, and 23 cases of sabotage, not on railway property since December, 1961. In the 23 cases damage was R2500.

The Star, 13th May, 1963.

Report in The Star, 13 May 1963

They appeared in court within forty-eight hours and were advised to plead guilty by their legal representative, Dr George Lowen QC. They were each sentenced to ten years in prison.

They were first moved to Leeuwkop Prison on the outskirts of Johannesburg, which he remembers for its cold and cruel conditions. Prisoners were never allowed to wear shoes, even when working in the quarry. Here they met up with Joe Gqabi and other political prisoners, which gave them a sense of solidarity and comradeship.

In December 1963, Shirish and seventy other prisoners were transferred by truck to Robben Island. At Robben Island the pointless and brutal manual labour intensified. The warder's there had a slogan they would recite to prisoners working in the limestone quarry: *"Klap die groot klip kleiner en die klein klip finer"* (Knock the big stone smaller and the small stone finer).

Due to the large numbers of common law prisoners, Robben Island also had its share of the "Numbers" gangs. Shirish quickly learnt that gangsters were calling the shots in the prison and the warders used these gangs to attack and beat up political prisoners. Slowly, political prisoners, who were in the minority at the time, were able to politicise them and eventually gained their respect. In time the authorities became aware of the effect that this interaction had on the common law criminals and segregated them into two categories, disallowing interaction. Eventually, the common law prisoners were transferred out and the Island was used exclusively to incarcerate political prisoners.

On the Island, inmates made creative use of all and any resources they were able to access. They started soccer

clubs in the prison and James Chirwa, a comrade from Malawi, made soccer nets from discarded nylon found on the seashore. One of Shirish's most treasured possessions is a belt made from the same material that comrade Lambert Mbatha had made for him. He was able to smuggle this item off the island on his release, a contravention of the rule that all personal belongings became state property. Inmates would also make musical instruments out of kelp and Shirish in particular would sew pockets onto prison trousers using old cut-up khaki shirts.

Shirish was eventually released in 1973. He was banned and put under house arrest in Fordsburg from 1973 to 1978, compelled to report once a week at the Fordsburg Police Station. It was during this period that he met and began courting Rajula, a childhood friend, for whom he would gladly break his house arrest conditions. They married in 1978 and moved to Lenasia. After the expiry of his first banning order and house arrest, he was banned for a further two years without house arrest.

Rajula was not political but became active in the Detainees Parents Support Committee when Shirish and Indres's brother Prema were arrested and charged for harbouring Steven Lee who had escaped from Pretoria Prison. Shirish and Prema were sentenced to one year in prison, which they served at the Fort.

Shirish and Rajula's child – their son Kamal – was born in 1980 and she tragically passed away in a motorcar accident in 1985. To this day, when asked about her, a smile illuminates Shirish's face. Shirish and Kamal live in Lenasia.



Shirish and Rajula's wedding, 1978



Collage of pictures of Shirish

Faker Salie²⁴



Faker Salie was born in Johannesburg on 1 February 1937. His parents were Narsi Parbhoo and Koebra Sallie and he had two sisters, Zatoon and Rabia. He completed a BSc degree at Wits University in 1958 and went to the University of Cape Town a year later to complete an education diploma. He started work as a teacher at Lenasia High School in 1960, until he was forced to flee in 1965.

I was recruited into Umkhonto we Sizwe by Laloo “Isu” Chiba. His view that all peaceful means of liberating South Africa from apartheid had been exhausted strongly resonated with my own personal feelings. I too felt that armed struggle was the final option. The Spear of the Nation had been struck up and I joined in.

As part of his induction, Faker attended lecture sessions with Solly Vania, led by Isu at his home. “Discussions centered on topics such as socialism, communism, capitalism, and on issues that would precipitate revolutions – we used China and Cuba as models. We had the opportunity on two occasions to listen to lectures by an impressive engineer, Rusty Bernstein. On occasion, we visited the home of Paul Joseph in Fordsburg. I was in awe of this amiable and modest man’s incredible knowledge of the workings of various political systems.”

On another occasion, along with friends such as Solly Vania and Billy Nannan, they were invited to a party at Isu’s house, where Nelson Mandela, Dennis Brutus and other notable freedom fighters were present.

Different members were given the task of reconnoitring various sites around the city. They each submitted reports regarding site suitability, the mode of execution and timing – which was very important because the policy was that the safety of lives was paramount.

Faker's first assignment was to drop a Molotov cocktail off an iron walkover bridge in the Fordsburg/Braamfontein area onto a passing goods train. Under Isu's instruction two cocktails were made. Isu watched as Faker dropped them onto the open, wood-laden carriage as it passed under the bridge. The train continued moving with one of its carriages ablaze. This completed his initiation.

This was the only time I was given some initiative to act on my own in this capacity. All other events were done under Isu's supervision. Isu took charge of planning, handling and setting "hot stuff" [handling the explosives], thereby taking all the major risks. My role was subordinate to this. We could not have had a more able and courageous leader than Isu.

Faker recalls that the unit had been involved in both sabotage and scouting activities. He accompanied Isu to a pylon situated on the outskirts of the Coronationville area that carried a heavy load of high voltage lines to industrial/commercial areas. "I accompanied Isu on this mission and mainly watched as he deftly taped, set the charge and time of the detonator," he said.

He was involved in reconnoitring possible targets for Isu, including another pylon in the Croesus/Newclare area; and the Fordsburg Central Rd Post Office, which he decided was an ideal target due to its huge interior and wooden floorboards.

After reconnoitring and reporting on the favourability of a target, he was not further involved. He thought that the project had been assigned to another cell. His view is that the "recces" were not necessarily the "doers" and that was an excellent strategy. It meant that cells operated independently – a sound security measure.

During the "Potato Boycott," the ANC called a general strike. Faker remembers being involved with Solly and Isu in targeting a railway signal box in the Langlaagte/New Canada vicinity. The idea was that the railway would be disabled, thereby preventing trains from reaching the city from the townships.

My final assignment was the power station [electricity sub-station], with its many transformers, situated opposite the Springbok Dance Hall at the corner of 23rd Street, Vrededorp. For the first time our cell co-opted the aid of a fourth person – a high profile freedom fighter and member of another cell – Abdulhay Jassat. The "stuff" needed for the job was picked up. Abdulhay drove the van to the site and would remain in the van, alert in case of [the need for] a quick getaway. My task was to guard the entry point to the complex, to warn those inside doing the job, and to ward off passers-by. When a loud grating sound came from inside the power station, I managed to slip in and check that things were okay. Solly and Isu came out, I signalled Abdulhay and we drove off. I later learned that the barrel contained oil or kerosene which the creative pair had moved to a preferred spot for greater effect – and what an effect it was!

The activists were urged to find new recruits, something Faker did not like doing because, among other things, it meant bringing friends into possibly dangerous situations.



Langlaagte Railway Station

The most suitable person he found was Dilly (Dalpat), and the recommendation was made to Isu.

A message was delivered to our house telling Solly Vania that he needed to leave the country immediately. My sister was engaged to Solly. We decided to get Solly out of South Africa within 24 hours. Luckily both Solly and I had passports – he left on 7 September 1964. I later learned that Solly had difficulty entering Kenya because the immigration officials did not believe him to be a bona fide refugee since he had a passport. It was only after confirmation from the ANC office in Tanzania that Solly was released. My sister, Zatoon, left to join Solly in Nairobi. Later my mother and sister left. Our home on 17th St was sublet to Billy Naidoo with all the contents.

Even though Solly had told Faker to leave, he felt no urgency to do so. However, when alerts came from two other sources saying two Special Branch policemen had visited Billy Naidoo's

home asking about Faker and his whereabouts, he went into hiding, living in different places for short spells.

He left the country by car on 26 December 1965 to join his family in Kenya. It was a long and arduous journey. He was not allowed into Tanzania because of his South African passport and was stranded at the border post for three weeks. He eventually went back to Zambia and flew from there to Nairobi.

It took him several months to arrive in Nairobi. During this time his family had almost given up on ever seeing him alive. He taught at the Kenyatta College in Nairobi until 1968 and then moved to Canada in 1969. There he taught at two different secondary schools until he retired in 1995.

He was married to Naseem Keshavjee, but they subsequently got divorced. He has two children, Enver Sallie and Richard Sallie.

Reggie Vandeyar²⁵

Reggie Vandeyar's political consciousness and activism naturally flowed from his experiences of discrimination and poverty during his formative years. He sought the spear of revolution and courageously fought among those that aspired to a non-racial and democratic country.

His father, Pakiry Siven Vandeyar, migrated to South Africa as an indentured labourer around the turn of the last century. Upon Vandeyar senior's arrival, the immigration officers thought that he could not possibly have the Afrikaans surname "van der Heer," so they changed it into something more appropriate. So it came to be that Reggie's registered name was Rajigopal Pakiry. His mother, Chinnamal, was also the daughter of indentured labourers and was raised in Heidelberg, some 60km south east of Johannesburg.

The youngest of eight children, Reggie was born on 15 July 1931 in Newclare, a township located close to Johannesburg city centre. His father died when he was just eleven months old, leaving his mother to raise the family. They lived in a number of different houses in Fordsburg during his childhood.

While his mother had no formal education, she spoke five languages and used her exceptional cooking skills to supplement her meagre earnings as a washerwoman at a laundry. Reggie recalls his daily chore of collecting his mother's one-shilling wage after school and using it to buy food so that his sister was able to prepare the family's supper.





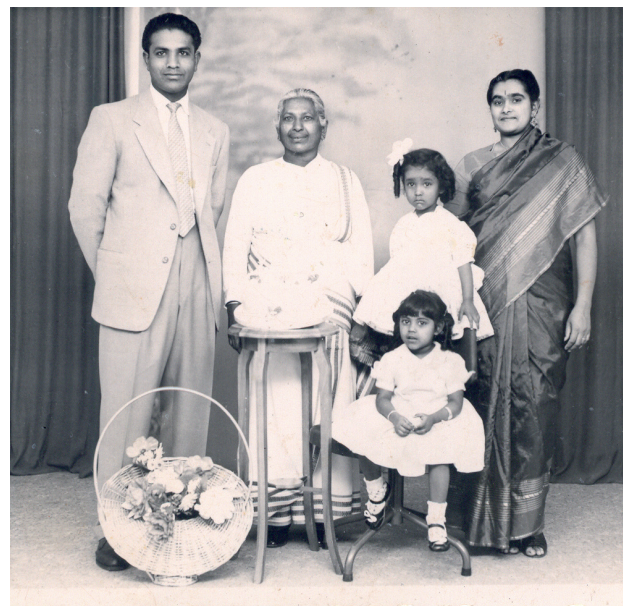
Reggie as a young boy

The incident that led to the realisation that he should find ways to earn money is etched in his mind:

One day, I returned from school hungry and asked my sister for food. She reprimanded me saying how I could be asking for food when I had already eaten. She was referring to the slice of toast and coffee I had in the morning before classes.

Reggie's brief schooling career began and ended at the Bree Street Primary School. He recalls attending school barefoot, poorly dressed and constantly hungry. While in standard four, at the age of eleven, he decided that an income, instead of schooling, was what was needed.

He dropped out of school and embarked on a number of entrepreneurial ventures. He bought offal and trotters and, with the help of his mother, cleaned and prepared them for



L-R Reggie, Chinnamal (mother), Sushila (daughter), Assoo (wife) and Sharmala (niece-seated), c 1950's

sale. Later, with a friend, he would collect mushrooms on the mine dumps and display them in a basket. They would always wet the mushrooms, to increase the weight when he sold them to the Linton and Waverly hotels. He also sold flowers outside the Starlight Bioscope and quickly became skilled at arranging bouquets.

The extra income allowed him to indulge in a favourite pastime, watching movies at the Starlight Bioscope. When he was called on to pray, he would retort, "The bioscope is my church and the comic book is my Bible."

Reggie became very streetwise and befriended a group of neighbourhood boys who formed a small gang and could regularly be seen playing cards and pool, fighting, smoking or hustling for money. They would while away their days at the Bantu Men's Social Centre, one of the few recreational



The Johannesburg City Hall was used for many protest meetings in the 1950's

centres for blacks in the city. It was here that his appreciation for boxing as a sport grew.

One day, while strolling around town and hustling for money with his friend Paul Joseph, they were directed to the offices of the Communist Party. They were told that if they distributed leaflets, they would be given some food. This was Reggie's first political experience, at the age of twelve, and a turning point in his life. It set off a lifetime commitment to democracy in South Africa.

Reggie joined the Young Communist League (YCL) in 1943 and attended the weekly meetings held by the Communist

Party on the City Hall steps. He heard the speeches of leading Communists such as Joe Slovo, Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Moses Kotane, who greatly influenced his thinking. He was an avid reader and worked his way through the Marxist classics. Reggie attended lectures in Marxism given by Ben Turok at his home.

During the Second World War, the Communist Party would seize shops whose owners were hoarding goods for sale at exorbitant prices on the black market. The party would commandeer these shops and force the owners to sell the goods, especially food, at the control prices.

I remember a visit from a distant but wealthy relative who owned a shop on the East Rand. This man helped my mother financially from time to time. He bragged that he was making a killing from hoarding goods. I rebuked him and told him that he was an exploiter of the poor and a traitor. Of course, I received a beating from my mother for this act of insolence.

At one time, he was offered a job by a Mr Moolla in Vereeniging, and he moved there. The salary was better than his previous earnings, but living and working conditions were unbearable. He stayed there for several months and used his spare time to nurture and grow his love for reading. He studied Marxist classics by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin; and immersed himself in Leon Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, among others.

He stayed there for a few months until one morning he awoke at 4am, packed his things and boarded a train home. At home, his family were preparing to celebrate his sister's wedding and made the assumption that he had been given leave to attend the wedding. After the festivities were over, he told his mother that he had quit and returned to Johannesburg permanently. He found work as a page at the Ambassador Hotel and was eventually promoted to the position of switchboard operator.

During this period, the Nationalist Group took over the leadership of the Transvaal Indian Congress. He was greatly influenced by Ismail Meer, Yusuf Cachalia, JN Singh and Dr Yusuf Dadoo, who advocated militant action and supported the idea of the unity of the oppressed people. He attended public meetings at the "Red Square" in Fordsburg and sold

copies of the radical newspapers *Clarion* and *New Age*. He remembers that one of the most persistent challenges he experienced as an activist was being the family's sole breadwinner and as a result he had to be very cautious not to jeopardise his employment. In 1948 he was recruited into the Transvaal Indian Congress, became a fully-fledged member and, over time, he held a number of leadership positions in the organisation.

Reggie remembers being part of the campaign for the Congress of the People, where activists went door-to-door in townships across the province – as others did in every part of the country – canvassing demands and ideas for freedom and democracy. The responses they collected were embroidered onto the tapestry that became the Freedom Charter, which was adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown on 25-26 June 1955. Reggie also vividly remembers the campaign against the Group Areas Act that sought to relocate Indians in Johannesburg to Lenasia.

Reggie established himself as a waiter and a manager within the service industry and worked in a number of prestigious restaurants in Johannesburg. When working at the Red Lantern in Fordsburg in 1954 he met and fell in love with his wife Assoo who was working in an underwear factory in Doornfontein. In 1955 they had a huge wedding at the Poll Street Hall and Reggie remembers with a tinge of embarrassment that they ran short of food on the occasion. The couple decided to live in Fordsburg and their two children, Sushila and Karuna, were both born at 36A Park Road.

After the watershed events of 1960, Reggie was an early recruit into the underground of the South African Communist



The Ambassador Hotel

Party (SACP) because he was a disciplined and trusted comrade. He recruited Laloo "Isu" Chiba into the SACP in late 1960 and they constituted an underground cell.

Reggie remembers printing 60 000 leaflets with Dr Essop Jassat in support of Nelson Mandela's call for a stay-at-home on 29 May 1961. The printing was done under dangerous conditions and he narrowly escaped arrest.

In early 1961, the underground cell – in line with the SACP's decision to engage in sabotage activity before the formation of MK – was changed into an SACP sabotage unit under the leadership of Wolfie Kodesh. It comprised Paul Joseph, Reggie and Isu. In the early days, units were engaged in the disruption of power supply and telecommunications.

During the latter half of 1961 the SACP's sabotage units were instructed to disband and become part of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). The reconstituted unit comprised exactly the same individuals, except that Wolfie now reported to his superiors in the Johannesburg Regional Command of MK.

Reggie recalls the first act of sabotage that he, Isu, Wolfie and Paul embarked upon. They had identified telephone lines in Springs that they would sever using a hacksaw and a sickle that they tied to a broom handle. This would have the impact of disrupting communications in this predominantly Afrikaner



Reggie sitting in between Henry Makgothi and Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Congress of the People

area. They chose the target because it was located on the same street as the home of Rev Douglas Thompson, who was known as the "Red Reverend" because of his radical politics. They reasoned that he would offer them refuge if anything went wrong.

When they arrived at the target, Reggie climbed a tree and started hacking the telephone wires while the others kept lookout. From the treetop Reggie saw that squad cars had pulled up close by and he alerted the rest of the crew.

I told the others to leave without me because it would have taken me too long to climb down. I decided "In for a penny, in for a pound" and cut the last of the wires. The

others ran away and I was able to see them at the top of the hill. To my relief, I soon realised that the police were raiding an illegal shebeen that was being run on a field close by and were not aware of us.

Reggie recalls his part in the bombing of three targets on the night of MK's formation on 16 December 1961, along with Wolfie, Isu and Paul. It was the most daring act of sabotage he was involved in. At the time, he was working at the Knights Tavern in Fox St, Johannesburg. He was collected from his place of work where he had arranged for someone to cover for him and tell anyone asking after him that he was in the toilet with an upset stomach. They planted and detonated the bombs at two of the targets and they quickly returned him to work, just in time to deal with a customer's complaint that his chicken had not been properly grilled! The rest of the unit went on to bomb a third target immediately thereafter.

As a result of the bombings, the Special Branch raided Reggie's house soon thereafter. They found some potassium permanganate powder on his wardrobe and a rusted gas pistol in his toolbox, and confiscated these as proof of his involvement. He was arrested and taken to the Fort, a prison in Johannesburg, which he describes as a "horrible, dark and miserable place". He spent the festive season in prison haunted by the sounds of a Hillbrow in celebration that intensified his feeling of isolation. He was charged on a count of possession of a firearm and possession of an explosive material and sentenced to a fifty pounds fine on each count. Despite legal advice to the contrary, he decided to forego appeal and pay the fine because he was exhausted and desperately needed to return to work to support his family.

On his release, he was informed that he had been suspended from the organisation for six months due to his negligence. Depressed and battle-weary, he did not have the energy to contest the decision, but he smiles wryly when he recalls that after three months he was informed that the organisation required him to return.

Reggie was asked to form his own unit and he recruited Indres Naidoo and Shirish Nanabhai, both executive members of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress. Subsequently Shirish, Indres and Reggie executed a number of acts of sabotage.

But everything changed dramatically when a character called Gammat Jardine appeared on the scene. Yusuf Isaacs (also known as Yusuf Asvat) says that he introduced Gammat to Reggie. On the other hand, Reggie's recollection is that Gammat arrived at his house one evening as he and his wife Assoo were about to go to the cinema. Gammat said he had an idea that Reggie was involved in sabotage and he wanted to supply him with weapons. He brought a revolver wrapped in newspaper for good measure. Reggie was very suspicious, strenuously denied any involvement in MK activities and asked him to leave.

Reggie reported the incident to his superiors but was told that the possibility of procuring weapons was important and that he should carefully engage with the stranger. Gammat, for his part was very persistent and was able to deliver quantities of dynamite. He said he was very interested in being part of MK structures. Even though Reggie was wary, the hierarchy gave the green light that Gammat should be recruited.

On the night of 17 April 1963, the full extent of Gammat's betrayal was revealed. The unit had planned to bomb a signal



A photograph of the signal box used as evidence in Reggie's trial

relay box at the Riverlea railway station. Just after placing the explosives and lighting the fuse, the whole area lit up and police surrounded them, but Gammat was nowhere to be found – he had quietly disappeared. The police claimed they received an anonymous tip-off and consistently denied any knowledge of Gammat. But it was clear that he was a police informer from his behaviour, his actions and, as it was later realised, he had supplied fake explosives. It is understood that he fled to Cape Town and it is understood that he was assassinated, presumably by MK operatives.

Indres was shot in the arm as they tried to escape, but they were all captured and arrested. They were taken to a police station. Reggie remembers the brutal torture they endured.

He remembers the police pulling his hair and repeatedly banging his head against a concrete wall. At one point, four policemen were beating him and hit him with a rifle in his ribs. One officer twisted his arms while two others pounded the lower lumbar region of his spine, inflicting lifelong damage to his back. The beating continued until all he could do was scream out “Yes!” to every question he was asked.

Eventually he lost consciousness and, when he awoke, found himself in a police car outside his house. Hooting awakened Assoo and she emerged from the house in a nightgown. The police raided the house, but did not find any incriminating evidence. Reggie recalls trying to console his wife, telling her that everything would be fine and that he would be back shortly.

From there they were taken to Marshall Square, where they found that Abdulhay Jassat and Isu Chiba had also been arrested. Abdulhay, Isu and Shirish received the brunt of the torture as the rest of them were too badly injured to endure further abuse. They were taken to the Fort where the mood was initially heavy and sombre. But Abdulhay broke into song, singing *Brown skin girl*, a popular Caribbean song that lifted their spirits. They were kept in the same cells as common-law prisoners and Reggie remembers that, contrary to his expectations, they were shown kindness by these prisoners who offered them blankets and were generally sympathetic.

At the time of their arrest, John Vorster was piloting the Sabotage Act through Parliament and they were the first to be tried under the new law. Initially, all five of them were charged for the same offences. Then the state decided to separate the cases of the three caught red-handed and

Abdulhay and Isu. Charges were eventually dropped against the latter two due to lack of evidence.

Dr George Lowen QC, their advocate, managed to reduce the forty charges of sabotage that they were initially faced down to three. In the end, Justice Bekker sentenced each of them to ten years. Reggie, Shirish and Indres served most of their sentences on Robben Island. It was a difficult time on the Island as the warders were brutal and inhumane. They served their time in the general section with people such as Henry “Squire” Makgothi, Jacob Zuma, Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, James Chirwa and Henry Fazzie. They were able to read, debate, engage and reinforce a strong sense of solidarity and comradeship.

When Reggie was released in 1973, he was banned and put under house arrest. During the years of his imprisonment, Assoo never stopped working and was the sole breadwinner. His family was forced to move to Lenasia after the Group Areas Act was enforced, a law Reggie vehemently opposed more than 20 years before. He missed out on the formative years of his children’s lives and initially struggled to re-establish his life because work was scarce for a banned person and conditions in the country very repressive. With time, he was able to find work as a sales representative and rebuild his life. Reggie and Assoo continue to live in Lenasia, both in retirement.

Initials of Officer making entry and date.
Voortekers van bevestiging wat inskrywing maak en datum.

Date of discharge/Datum van ontslag
Appeal noted/Appel aangeteken
Alterations in sentence/Veranderings in vonnis

Checked by/Nagegaan deur
R.C.A./R.A.A. No. 276-H-1963 Case/Saak No. CC 276/63 18/63
Police Station/Polisekantoor

In the Supreme Court of South Africa.
In die Hooggeregshof van Suid-Afrika.
(Witwatersrand - Local -) DIVISION.
-AFDELING.

To the Sheriff of the Province of Transvaal or his lawful Deputy. GREETING. SALUUT.
WHEREAS it is a Criminal Session of the Supreme Court of South Africa holden before me at Johannesburg. NADemaal by 'n strafsitting van die Hooggeregshof van Suid-Afrika gehou voor my te Johannesburg.
on the Twentieth day of May in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty Three. op die twintigste dag van Mei in die Jaar van ons Here Eensduisend Negehoonderd Dertien.
the undermentioned prisoner was duly convicted of the crime(s) undermentioned and was sentenced by the Judgment of the said Court to undergo the punishment(s) affixed to his (her) name in such place as may be prescribed by lawful authority: So dien dit om u te gelas om in die naam van die Staat genoemde gevangene in u besaaring te ontvang en te hou totdat hy (sy) genoemde straf ondergaan het of ooreenkomstig die wet daarvan ontfang word.

Prisoner's Name. Naam van Gevangene.	Sentence. Straf.
Reggie Nondya	10 years imprisonment
Age/Onderdom 32	
Nationality/Nationaliteit. S.A.	
Race/Ras. Indian	
Sex/Geslag. Male	
Of what Crime convicted. Aan watter misdad skuldig bevind.	Sabotage in contravensie of Section 21(1) of Act 74 of 1962

RECEPTION OFFICE
JOHANNESBURG
13 MAY 1963

Given under my hand, at Johannesburg, this, 13th day of May, 1963.
Gegee onder my hand te Johannesburg, op hede die 13de dag van Mei, 1963.

Registrar.
Griffier.
S. J. S. S. S.

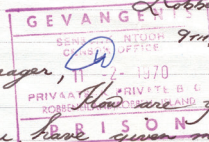
Presiding Judge.
Voorsittende Regter.

Reggie's warrant of committal

Reggie to Sushila: 88/63

Robben Island Prison,
9th February 1970.

Hello Sushila,



How are you and M.K.

The two of you have given me a wonderful present for the New Year. Furthermore you have made me the happiest man on the Island.

I awaited your letter with anxiety and fear. My fear was naturally unfounded and foolhardy. You see what happened, your uncle from Durban wrote and informed me of his visit to Jo-hannesburg. At the same time he did say that Karuna passed, and as a token of encouragement, they presented him with a gift. Somehow he did not mention your exam results. Although he did have some wonderful remarks to make about you. So you see, this baffled me. They mention K's results and not yours. All sorts of foolhardy notions entered my head. Perhaps you've failed, that is why they did not give me your results.

I don't suppose, I fully comprehended and realise that I have two ~~geniuses~~ geniuses ~~for~~ as my kids. I should never, never, have doubted your capabilities as a scholar. Thank you! my love, both you and Karuna have been wonderful. Keep on behaving and put in a little more work. If you pass, your &

tulate Sushila for her success and send to Dada's results! Dija regularly with me. I am about to send your letters. Visi and Vitea tell reply to him soon. I have received has sent me. By now you and that Parry daddy visited me. Wungas and himself visited me day. How is Sushana? Is she tell her not to worry so much. reg kom. My love I must end my love to all friends, relatives love I forget. The episode about brother Tolly is a closed case. then to him straightening out the he has not received my letter. and kisses to you and Karuna most adorable somebody your

I remain
Yours Ever loving
Dad (and best pal).
Reggie

A letter to his daughter, Sushila, from Robben Island

Solly Vania²⁶



L-R: Solly Vania, Raman Chiba, Billy Naidoo and Isu Chiba, August 1963

Solly Vania was born in Krugersdorp on 6 September 1936. He was the fourth eldest in a family of eleven siblings – six brothers and five sisters. When he was six, the family moved to Fietas. He started school at the Bree Primary School and thereafter moved to Johannesburg Indian High School, where he matriculated.

Solly was admitted to Wits University to study medicine, but left after one year. He attended a teachers' training college, qualified as a teacher, and found a job as a maths and science teacher at the Lenasia High School.

Laloo "Isu" Chiba said that his family had a very close relationship with the Vania family that dated back to the early 1950s. "We were very frequent visitors to each other's homes and I took a great liking to him," Isu said. Isu recalls:

During the late 1950s, we engaged in a series of political debates and discussions, and had a pretty good idea of his views and attitudes. When MK was formed, I had no hesitation whatsoever in sounding him out on the issue of the armed struggle – which he considered had now become a necessity after the banning of the ANC. I then recruited him into my unit.



Teachers at the Central Indian High School (Congress School)

I found him to be a highly disciplined, dedicated and loyal cadre; he had no hesitation in carrying out any task that was assigned to him. Of the 20-odd MK operatives under my command, I regarded him as being among the top few upon whom I could rely with great confidence. This unit also consisted of Faker Salie. Later, Solly was made a unit leader, with Kista Moonsamy, Magan Narsee and Bobby Vassen under him. The attempt to blow up the Central Post Office was done under his leadership, but it failed because of defective gelignite.

These are the characteristics which I took into account when a special unit was established to do a particular job – Vrededorp sub-station – and I made him a member of that unit.

He undertook to do the tasks assigned to him without grumbling, and went about doing so humbly and modestly.

If for whatever reason I were to relinquish my position as platoon commander, I would have had no hesitation in handing my responsibilities to one of two people – one was Solly Vania, and the other was Abdulhay Jassat.

In an interview with Wolfie Kodesh in May 1997, Isu (Chiba 1997) said:

I would just like to add one or two points if I may. I say this in memory of one of our unit leaders, Solly Vania. He is no longer around with us. I must say that I am one of the very fortunate one's to have lived long enough to see freedom in our country. I think I've said this before and I want to repeat that there were people equally dedicated, equally courageous, and equally committed to the cause of liberation.

Solly Vania was one of them. Although he didn't die in battle or during operations, I do know about his ideals. I fully understand his commitment, his dedication. Whatever I have to do politically, I am now in the National Assembly; I will do my utmost to ensure that we have a South Africa that he himself had dreamt of.

When Salie got word that the security forces were looking for him, he left the country in September 1964. He married Zatoon Sallie (Faker's sister) and they had two daughters, Shera and Nadia. After living for a while in Kenya, they moved to Canada. On 2 December 1969, while cleaning his car in the garage, he died of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.

Faker Salie said this "about my friend Solly Vania":

As to my personal relationship with Solly, I first got to know him as a friend in high school and university. This friendship grew during the time he courted and married my sister. I was fortunate to learn more about his not-often-revealed qualities during our involvement in ANC activities (meetings, lectures and social get togethers).

I found him to be one of the best read of all my friends. I could always rely on his recommendations for a "good read". He was a very intelligent person, extremely sensitive to the hardships and the injustices suffered by the oppressed masses during the "white man's ruthless rule" in South Africa.

I strongly admired the man's humility; his unselfish initiatives; his courage and daring to take risks for the benefit and safety of the members in his cell; he reaffirmed his leadership qualities and gained respect of all those of us who came to him in this capacity.

On a more personal level, I appreciated Solly as a man committed to the care and well being of his own family and, during this time my own family was under duress, having given up our home and my mother and younger sister seeking refuge in Nairobi, Kenya. Solly who had been strongly advised to leave South Africa, readily lived with them and took a head-of-the-family role while I was still in South Africa.

His accidental death, while I was teaching in Saskatchewan, Canada, came as an incredible shock. I barely made it to the cemetery. It was one of the saddest days of my life. My heart went out to his wife and two little daughters ... so very young ... they did not fathom the gravity of the occurrence. How proud he would be of them now ... how very proud!

And so, with the memory of the tender grace of days gone by and the passage of the dearest friend ever ... all I can do is to wish PEACE.

Bobby Vassen²⁷



The second son of Rangee and Tozey Vassen, Bobby Vassen was born on 27 April 1938 in Fordsburg. He describes Fordsburg as the “little world, which we inherited”. Bobby fondly recalls being surrounded by the “busyness” of family and close friends, a simple pleasure that made up for the lack of recreational facilities available to the community.

Bobby, like most of the children in his community, attended the nearby Bree Street Primary School and lived what he describes as an “ordinary” life. It was only when he moved to the Johannesburg

Indian High School that he became politically conscious. One of the realities that sparked his awareness was the all-white teaching staff and the inference that black teachers were incapable of teaching at high school level.

School life was characterised by the imposition of Afrikaans as the language of instruction and the use of reactionary Afrikaans literature to indoctrinate and stifle the growth of young black minds. The practice produced a rebel who would boycott and refuse to commit to memory “the language of the oppressor”.



Govind Chiba, Bobby's close friend on the left

Bobby recalls the ideological significance that his refusal represented. "We had no problem learning and memorising Keats, Shelley and Shakespeare, but we drew the line when it came to memorising Afrikaans poetry." As a result, he was regularly caned for "not knowing his lines". High school did, however, afford him the opportunity to forge deep bonds of friendship with like-minded comrades. Some of his closest friends were Sam Patel, Govind Chiba and, later, Billy Nannan. Through his brother Tommy, he was introduced to older comrades who would become a leadership force in his life.

At the age of seventeen, he joined the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and elaborates on why, "My decision to join the movement was almost predetermined; living in a country obsessed with race, where whites had all the power and non-whites had none, it was imperative to have Indian

representation." While a member of the TIYC, he met Suliman "Babla" Saloojee, Mosie Moolla, Essop Jassat and Abdulhay Jassat – friends that he values to this day.

Bobby was part of the fortunate few who were able to attend university, and he went to the University of Witwatersrand, where political consciousness took root. But he recalled that the period was one of the loneliest, daunting and most bewildering moments in his life. He was wrenched from the familiar nest that Fordsburg was and thrust into a "white world". Enduring this period, a "private hell", was only possible because of the reassuring presence of his friends Sam, Billy and Govind, who were also on campus. It was here that he met Ursula van Zyl, whom he would marry in 1963.

Graduating from the University of Witwatersrand in 1961 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, he sought a job as a teacher and found a position at Waterval Indian Group Two School, located on the farm belonging to the very wealthy Mia family. The three years he spent there would deepen his understanding of life. "University is where I gained knowledge, Mia's farm is where I learned about life," Bobby said. He taught English and Race Studies, which he grew to hate as it reinforced the worst racial stereotypes, and Bobby was acutely aware that the lessons he was teaching would undoubtedly perpetuate the idea that whites were superior and blacks inferior. A number of draconian rules effected by the then principal of the school would eventually result in Bobby being transferred to teach commerce, a subject he had no knowledge of. Over time, the principal assigned him to teach English to matrics.

Almost immediately after the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), Bobby was recruited into its structures by Isu

Chiba in 1962. He joined Reggie Vandeyar's unit for a short time and then to a unit led by Solly Vania. The other members were Kista Moonsamy (also known as Kista Phillips) and Magan Narsee.

Still in its formative years, MK soldiers received very basic training; they were taught how to do reconnaissance work, to move stealthily and gain access without leaving any traces and how to make Molotov cocktails, especially since the carrying of weapons was forbidden.

While the training was amateurish, the line of command was strong. MK foot cadres were incredibly disciplined: the two Vassen brothers, Bobby and Tommy, who lived under one roof, only found out some thirty-two years later that they had both been involved in the armed struggle.

Bobby's time in MK was characterised by long periods scouting for potential targets. They spent weeks, often months, monitoring possible targets. When a suitable location was eventually identified, dud explosives would often disappoint them.

Bobby tells of a mission that identified the Fordsburg Post Office as the target. Due to the busy road on which it was located, a large amount of time was dedicated to reconnaissance. Eventually they decided on a date and at 11pm on that night, when all the activity and movement had died down, the cinemas had also closed and all that remained was the echoing silence, they were poised to hit. Bobby was assigned the role of look-out and Solly would place the explosive.

After placing the bomb they made off to Bobby's house, where they anticipated an explosion. To their disappointment,

nothing happened. The attempt was reported in the *Rand Daily Mail*, which said that fingerprints were found on the bomb. As a result Solly went into hiding and eventually into exile. That would be the last time the cell would operate as comrades were being closely monitored and much of the movement's leadership were being detained.

Ursula, Bobby's wife, worked as a librarian downstairs from where they lived in Park Road and Bobby would "borrow" the keys after work and use the library as a clandestine meeting venue. The library was also used as a hiding place for banned literature; books written by Mao Zedong and Che Guevara were neatly concealed behind Enid Blyton.

Bobby continued to lead a double life, teaching at Mia's Farm during the day and planning to overthrow the government by night. When Ameen "Doha" Cajee sent a message from detention saying "Auntie Russum's boys should stay low", Bobby, his brother Tommy and his cousin Herby each thought that the message was for him since they were all engaged in clandestine political activity.

On 12 October 1964, Bobby received a surprise call from his father, who informed him that Sergeant Taylor of the Special Branch had come to the house in search of him. His father, by a stroke of quick thinking, explained he was a divorcee who had not seen his sons in years. Upon hearing this news, Bobby, went to the Special Branch office and asked to see Sergeant Taylor who was thankfully unavailable. Realising this stupidity, he told his cousin Herby who then passed the information on to senior members in the movement.

He was sent a message from ANC leadership saying if he was in possession of a passport he should get a ticket and leave

immediately. If he did not have a passport, other arrangements would be made. Two days later he resigned from his position at Mia's Farm with immediate effect, claiming he had received a scholarship to study in London that required him to leave immediately.

Upon finding out that his son was part of MK, his father did all that he could to get him out of the country. Money was a limited resource and his father emptied out his pockets and scraped just enough to pay for a plane ticket and 90 pounds of survival money. Bobby arrived in London on 16 October 1964.

Being in a new country presented its own challenges for Bobby. He managed to survive on the 90 pounds his father had given him and when he no longer had any money, he worked for his uncle, a greengrocer, earning five pounds for a full day's work. He received a phone call from an old university friend who relayed information about an opening at Wimbledon Boy's School. He quickly applied and started teaching again in January 1965. Six weeks later his wife and son flew in from South Africa to join him.

In 1969 he became a member of the ANC's South London Unit, where meetings, lectures and seminars were held. His main responsibilities were to collect newspaper articles that concerned the ANC, categorise and distribute them internationally, distribute ANC merchandise to open-minded stores and conduct mass mailings internationally. These letters were disguised in differently coloured envelopes and handwriting that would not reveal its authors. The method constituted the birth of a code system that Bobby and Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada designed to get information in and out of Robben Island.

Bobby quit state teaching in 1970 and joined Eurocentres, a private organisation of language schools. He then took up a position as principal of one of the four biggest schools in England. Bobby remained very active in South African related projects until 1990, when he accepted a full-time post at Michigan State University and where he and his wife would remain until 2006. It was in this time that he edited Ahmed Kathrada's *letters from Robben Island*. He did all in his power to make faculty and students aware of the history and the struggle in South Africa. Soon after retiring, he and his wife returned to England to be reunited with their two sons and two grand daughters.



Bobby at home, London, 2009

Tommy Vassen²⁸



Returning to South Africa after twenty-five years of exile in 1990, Tommy Vassen vividly remembers Ahmed Kathrada's warm embrace upon his arrival. A generation of absence was unable to dull the strong feelings of comradeship that bound these freedom fighters together.

Soon after his return, Tommy attended a memorial meeting for the two young Umkhonto we Sizwe operatives – Yusuf Akhalwaya and Prakash Napier – who were killed in December 1989 when the limpet mines they were carrying during a mission exploded prematurely. Yusuf's

father, Ebrahim "Abam" Akhalwaya, was a childhood friend. Although the circumstances were tragic, Tommy felt a certain sense of pride that the next generation of youth in his community was prepared to pay the ultimate price for involvement in the struggle against apartheid.

Tommy was born in Fordsburg on 27 January 1936, the eldest son of Rangee and Tozey Vassen. He recalls that Fordsburg was once a mining town and, all too frequently, the sirens would blare out the terrible message of a mine accident. It was here that lifetime friendships were formed and resistance to apartheid forged.

Tommy attended the nearby Bree Street Primary School, followed by secondary education at the Johannesburg Indian High School. Here Indian teenagers from all over the then Transvaal converged and reinforced shared sentiments of dissatisfaction with state-sanctioned discrimination.

Tommy also remembers this as an important moment in his social awakening: "How we strutted our stuff in our first pairs of long trousers, getting nearer to the foreign gender in their gymslips, tiny white ankle socks and proper shoes."

It was in high school that he would meet his wife Dela. It was also during this time that he was introduced to the "remarkable Chiba family" – because of the role they would play in nurturing and supporting him as a political activist. Tommy elaborates: "Raman and Govind taught me so much.



Tommy with Govind Chiba and a friend

Because of them I can understand enough of Einstein and Darwin to make some sense of the world. Isu led political classes and revealed Marx to us. How can anyone go wrong with such brothers, friends and comrades?"

Tommy describes high school as a "wondrous time" and is always reminded of the beacons of education, a handful of teachers who made their lives interesting, challenging and rewarding. "Two of them were god-fearing Afrikaners and one, a Jewish, communist science teacher, was lost in his own world but never without his red woollen tie. They spoke to us and with us with a deep awareness of humanity and fairness."

After completing high school in 1955, Tommy enrolled for teacher training at the first all Indian training college in the Transvaal. Two years later, he started his career in Kliptown, historically known for the adoption of the Freedom Charter. His first teaching experience had a profound impact on his life and Tommy will forever be haunted by the appalling conditions in which South African youth were expected to learn and grow: crumbling walls, mud floors that shifted in the rain and a roof that sheltered only selected parts of the campus

Tommy describes his attitude to racial segregation thus: "Whereas Fordsburg, Doornfontein, Ferreirstown etc. were 'non-white' areas, we were now hived off into 'Indians only' residences, the African majority into Soweto and Coloureds into Eldorado Park."

During this period Tommy was approached, in early 1962, in quite an unusual manner, to join MK. He was given a cinema ticket to the Majestic Cinema in Fordsburg and told

he would be contacted during the screening. A voice crept up in the darkness and whispered in his ear, asking whether he approved the declaration of armed struggle. When he said he did the whispering voice continued, and asked if he would support and participate in acts of sabotage? Tommy, without a moment's hesitation, affirmed that he would. And with that, the voice disappeared into the darkness. Subsequent to this atypical induction, Tommy began his work as an MK operative. Under the leadership of Abdulhay Jassat, his cell group was tasked to scout for potential government installations. Other members of the cell were Yusuf Isaacs (also known as Yusuf Asvat) and Moosa Moosajee.

Tommy admits, like all his fellow "Men of Dynamite", that other than the fervour and passion that they had for the cause, they were ill prepared for the task at hand. "The work was done by rote, no training, no understanding - light the touch paper and retire ... fast." They were all, however, instructed that on no account were lives to be lost. As a result, the training they did receive in the first few months focused on how to tape up windows and glass doors to minimise danger to them and more importantly to unexpected passers by.

At the time of his MK involvement, Tommy was teaching in Lenasia. Much of his work involved reconnoitring for potential sites to sabotage. The activity mainly, but not exclusively, involved daily travel routes used by comrades. For Tommy this meant carefully scouring the landscape of his train ride from Braamfontein to Lenasia. This scouting offered scope for derailment or the destruction of electricity substations and pylons. Pylons were favoured targets as they were far from human activity and thereby reasonably safe to attack.



Christmas lunch in London, 1987. This photo was sent to Kathy whilst he was on Robben Island

En route to school some colleagues on the train would taunt him, asking if he was making notes for sabotage targets. Tommy pretended not to hear them, or dismissed the taunt. A few, however actually offered live ammunition and small arms. While these offers were relayed to the leadership through Abdulhay, they were dismissed as too risky.

While they never did bomb any pylons, Tommy remembers Abdulhay and his first attempt to use Molotov cocktails. On the appointed evening they waited for a goods train to pass under the Harrison St bridge. As it arrived, they dropped their lethal bottles and flames went up almost instantly. Tommy remembers that after Abdulhay's instruction that they not run, the two calmly but briskly walked away, passing a policeman on the way, their hearts thumping throughout the drive back to Fordsburg. Pleased with their initiation, Tommy and Abdulhay walked into Herby Pillay's house in High Road, Fordsburg and met Kathy, on a social visit. The

obvious excitement beaming from their faces, Kathy casually provoked them, saying, "Ah, teacher by day and bomber by night." But as well-disciplined cadres neither of them rose to the bait. Such was the level of their discipline that none of them ever talked about their actions except to members of their cell. While many of them had suspicions of who were likely to be MK activists, they never dared ask.

One of the most significant and dangerous acts that Tommy took part in was over a weekend beginning on a Friday night and ending on Sunday evening. The idea was to be back at their normal jobs by Monday. Abdulhay informed him of the mission and en route he relayed the information that they were to collect a batch of ordnance that had been "liberated" by comrades in Natal. Both petrified and excited, they departed on Friday night, and slept at MP Naicker's home in Durban.

The following morning they met their link person, who turned out to be Billy Nair, another comrade that Tommy had previously met and had come to know very well during the Treason Trial of 1956. They talked about the "job" and continued on to the Himalaya Hotel for lunch. The rare treat of eating at a restaurant and being waited upon was cut short by the arrival of Auntie Ivy, his brother Bobby's aunt-in-law. To avoid being identified, they made their way out the backdoor.

Early on Sunday morning they set off for the next phase of a fairly complicated exercise. They arrived at the appointed building and were greeted by George Naicker and large crates of explosives. Tommy could not believe the coincidence, as this was an old family friend that he had in the past called "Uncle George". Needless to say, from that day forward, Uncle would forever be referred to as Comrade George.

The crates were loaded very, very gingerly. Once on board they were overlaid with straw, crockery and more straw, giving the impression that they were no more than delivery boys transporting plates and saucers.

The drive back to Johannesburg proved a harrowing experience. As they crawled down the highway at 45 kilometres per hour, they were both finely tuned into the contraction and expansion of the cans of nitroglycerine that clunked with every fluctuation. When they arrived in Fordsburg in the early hours of the morning, a relieved Tommy sauntered off home. For Abdulhay the saga was far from over, as he had to endure another 36 hours, as the liaison was late.

On yet another Friday evening, Abdulhay and Tommy set off for Pretoria. They would later be joined by Yusuf Asvat, who made his way to Pretoria by train. Upon realising that they were heading to Pretoria, Tommy became very nervous, sure that they were heading for the Union Buildings, the Voortrekker Monument or some other government installation. Abdulhay then informed him that the target was the house allocated to Nana Sita by the apartheid government. Nana Sita was a prominent leader of the Transvaal Indian Congress who was implacably opposed to the Group Areas Act. He flatly refused to leave his home and business in Hercules, which had been declared a white Group Area. The government had allocated him a house because the court insisted that he be given alternative accommodation once he was evicted.

Once in Laudium, they taped up the windows, and set timers and detonators. To this day, Tommy jokingly bemoans being relegated to a lookout, feeling slightly cheated from experiencing the danger and romance. By the time they got back to Johannesburg they were told that a news broadcast

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GROUP AREAS ACT and MR NANA SITA

The Group Areas Act passed in 1950 provides for the establishment of racial ghettos and restricts the ownership and occupation of land to specified racial groups.

In terms of this Act Mr Nana Sita was ordered in 1962 to leave his home in Pretoria which he and his family have occupied for the past forty-four years. He refused to go, was duly charged with 'occupying property in an area declared for White occupation only', and was sentenced to three months hard labour.

It was not his first stretch as a political prisoner. When it was over he returned to his home. In 1963 he was again arrested, charged and this time sentenced to six months in jail.

On August 7 this year he appeared in Court once more. He described the Group Areas Act as 'grotesque, unjust, vicious and humiliating'. Although he is sixty-nine years old, a sufferer from chronic arthritis, he did not ask the Court for mercy, declaring that he believed it was his sacred duty to resist injustice.

Mr Nana Sita, a former President of the Transvaal Indian Congress, has for these past five years been harrassed and persecuted for his stand against the Group Areas Act. He has become part of the history of resistance to apartheid in South Africa.

The arrest and trial of Mr Nana Sita underlines the unbearable plight of the African, Coloured and Indian peoples under South Africa's degrading apartheid system.

The heroic defiance of South Africa's unjust laws by Mr Nana Sita reflects the courage and determination of the majority of South Africans who are resisting the apartheid tyranny and fighting back in every possible way for their liberty.

Thousands of political fighters have been imprisoned in South Africa. Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Abram Fischer, Ahmed Kathrada and other political leaders are imprisoned for life. The freedom fighters of South Africa have now joined hands with the freedom fighters of the Zimbabwe African People's Union and are engaged in bitter battles against the security forces of the illegal Smith regime and detachments of the South African army.

We appeal to all who cherish liberty and human dignity to join in condemning the Group Areas Act in South Africa, and the vicious system of apartheid which makes such sacrifices necessary, to achieve freedom.

ACT NOW!

Send in your postcard or letter of protest to the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square, London W.C.2.

Support the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of Southern Africa against apartheid, and for freedom and human dignity.

Issued by the South African Indian Congress (London Committee),
c/o African National Congress, 49, Rathbone St., London W.1.
Contact us for further information at the above address.

Pamphlet by the South African Indian Congress in support of Nana Sita

reported an almighty explosion in Pretoria and there had been no casualties. They were ecstatic!

When Abdulhay was arrested, Tommy was obliged to go underground with his cousin Herby Pillay. His brother Bobby was also involved in MK activity and was forced to leave the country. After a few months of hiding, it was judged "safe" for Tommy to emerge and, quite mundanely, he had to appear before the education authorities and explain the missing months. As a result he was demoted and offered a temporary position.

On 14 April 1965, at the then Jan Smuts Airport (now OR Tambo International), Tommy said goodbye to a throng of comrades, friends and family. Over a year later, his wife Dela and his children came to him in London.

In contrast to the warmth of his departure, his arrival was characterised by incessant drizzle and dull grey sky. He travelled to his family on a bus and remembers that it was his brother Bobby and sister-in-law Ursula's warmth that made London bearable.

He also had to conquer the challenge of finding teaching employment while in England. From 1966 onwards he steadily climbed the rungs on the English educational sector's ladder and received a number of promotions, including a consultancy and headship. All the while he continued his political activity on an ad hoc basis. In the mid-seventies all ANC members in London and further afield were organised into branches. Tommy renewed his affiliation with the Communist Party and, in time, he represented both organisations at international conferences and solidarity workshops. He also sat on many regional committees set up for the many functions the ANC undertook.

At the end of a life spent fighting for freedom, Tommy says: "No revolution travels in a straight line. There have always been detours or even backward steps; such is the nature of struggle, where it sometimes moves only at the speed of evolution. Change is not without pain and judgement can only, at best, be deferred. No beginning, no end."

For Tommy the ANC is best described as a family that gave his life purpose and direction, "It gave us the noblest cause that humanity can undertake – to break free from the shackles of greed and power and determine our own destiny."



Tommy and Dela Vassen

People, events and songs associated with the

“Men of Dynamite”

The “Men of Dynamite” did not act alone. They had a network of close collaborators who provided legal support, medical assistance, finance, meals, cover, transport, storage space and meeting places. This was critical to their operations, and for their survival in the underground. There were dozens of such people, but a few stand out and are profiled here.

There were many significant events at the time. Some of these are recorded in Maniben Sita’s personal diary, while the escape from Marshall Square is described in some detail.

We also highlight two songs that were sung at the time. These then, are the people, events and songs associated with the “Men of Dynamite”.

People

Essop Jassat²⁹

Dr Essop Essak Jassat has over the years launched, served and guided numerous community and political organisations. Central to the objectives of all the organisations that he has been involved in was the provision of a dignified life for all, irrespective of religion, gender or race.

Essop is the second eldest of three siblings, who was born on 5 October 1932 in 11th St, Vrededorp, Johannesburg. Both his parents hail from India. His mother, Khadija Jassat (nee Haffajee), was born in Bardoli and his father, Essack Jassat, came from Takoli. His father was at various times a hawker and shopkeeper.

He matriculated from the Johannesburg Indian High School and was one of only 12 black students to be accepted by the Medical Faculty of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). At the end of his first year of studies, Essop was informed that there was no place at any of the hospitals for him to continue with his studies. Guided by the advice of Molvi Cachalia, he did a two-year science degree before continuing with his medical studies, which he completed in 1960.

Essop credits his interest in struggle politics to his father and eldest brother. In 1947 he joined the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and began to actively participate in the many campaigns and activities of the organisation. He was intelligent, principled and hard working, so it came as no surprise that he was elected as the chairman of the TIYC

shortly after having joined. Essop was also elected as an executive member of the Transvaal Indian Congress.

In 1953, Essop and Ahmed “Kathy” Kathrada represented the TIYC at an ANC Youth League conference that was held in Uitenhage. At the time, Indians required a permit to cross provincial boundaries. When they were stopped at a roadblock, Kathy told Essop to claim that he was Malay, which the police accepted. Kathy was arrested, tried and sentenced to three months imprisonment, suspended for two years.



Essop Jassat at Wits Medical School

1955 proved to be a seminal year for the 23-year-old. At the Congress of the People, Essop had the great privilege of introducing the education clause to the assembled delegates. That year, he also received the first of two successive five-year banning orders.

In 1964 Essop was charged and sentenced for failing to comply with the conditions of his banning order. George Bizos represented Essop at his appeal and argued that he inadvertently failed to report to the police on a particular day because he was responding to a medical emergency. He lost the appeal and Essop had to serve 10 days of a two year suspended sentence.

As chair of the Student Liberal Organisation at Wits, Essop came into contact with Bob Hepple. As the regime became more draconian, Bob recruited Essop into an underground unit, which was tasked with gathering intelligence and scouting potential sabotage targets. The unit was led by Bob and consisted of Essop, Sydney Shell and Katuchewitz.

MK units in the Johannesburg area used a spare room attached to his new surgery to store stocks of dynamite, gelignite, fuses and other material used in sabotage operations. Even though Essop suspected that his brother Abdulhay and other operatives were using his premises, he never probed in any way. When Essop was detained under the 90-day detention law, the Special Branch confirmed his suspicion.

Essop was on call to the underground as a medical doctor. He recalled a telephone call, in the early hours of a morning, requesting that he urgently go to Yeoville to treat two burn victims. On entering the backyard rooms he saw two

blackened and soot-covered individuals. As he cleaned their faces he immediately recognised Mac Maharaj and Ameen “Doha” Cajee. Upon closer examination of the room, he realised that the “chaps were trying to dry gunpowder on a stove, which then exploded”. Fortunately neither had suffered burns that required hospitalisation.

Kathy asked him to go a few times to Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia to treat members of the National High Command of MK. The last time he went there was on a Saturday in order to assess Govan Mbeki who was suffering from a debilitating eye problem. Essop was in the process of arranging for a sympathetic ophthalmologist to examine and treat the senior ANC leader. Unfortunately that never happened. The Thursday after Essop’s visit, Liliesleaf Farm was raided and the leadership was arrested.

Due to the outlawing of organisations as well as the imprisonment, exile and banning of friends and comrades political activities had been dampened during the late 1960s and the 1970s. It was during this period that Essop worked on launching and strengthening numerous community organisations, in particular, the Johannesburg Indian Social Welfare Association (JISWA), later renamed Johannesburg Institute for Social Services (JISS).

To counter the resurgence of community mobilisation after the 1976 Soweto uprising the apartheid government redoubled its efforts to co-opt pliable members of the oppressed. One such attempt was the creation of the South African Indian Council. In 1981, the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee was formed to oppose the elections of this toothless body and Essop was elected chairperson.



Speaking at an Anti-SAIC meeting, Lenasia, 1982

With the resurgence of Congress politics in the 1980s it was decided to revive the TIC on 1 May 1983. Essop was a strong advocate of this notion and was elected as the president of the TIC. He also became a patron of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 and was detained with fellow UDF leaders in 1984.

In December 1984, Essop and 15 others, including UDF co-presidents Albertina Sisulu and Archie Gumede, were charged with treason. Due to "insufficient and unconvincing evidence", charges against 12 of the 16 accused were withdrawn in December 1985.



Essop Jassat, Reggie Vandeyar and Ramlal Bhoolia at CODESA

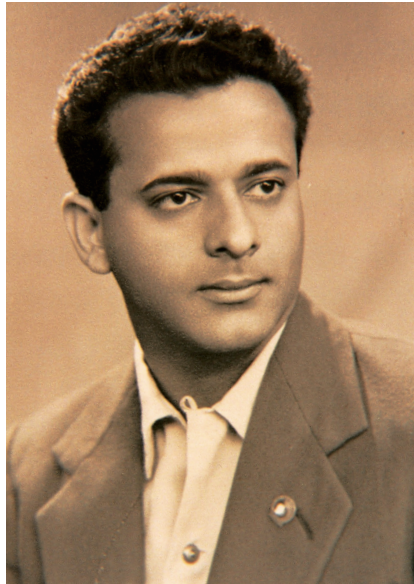
Essop was a TIC representative at the CODESA negotiations. In 1994 he was elected as a Member of Parliament and served in this position until 2004.

Today Essop has returned to his surgery on Bree Street in Fordsburg and is semi-retired.

On 25 May 1964, Essop married Shireen Patel and they have a son, Aadil, and two daughters, Yumna and Zaheera.

Ahmed Essop

“Quarter” Khota³⁰



Ahmed Essop “Quarter” Khota, who was born on 5 July 1928, deserves credit for selflessly supporting the liberation struggle over an extended period of time. His friends affectionately knew him as “Quarter”, a name given to him by Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu. It was a play on his surname and a reference to his slight physique since many beverages at the time were sold in a “¼ pint”.

During the 1950s, he was a member of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and part of the corps of activists that contributed to the major campaigns of that decade. He assisted in fundraising for the Congress movement during that time.

The contributions that Quarter is best remembered for revolves around his business, New Reef Wholesalers (Pty) Ltd, that was located on 27(c) Market Street, Ferreirastown, Johannesburg. He was involved in the business since its inception in 1953 but assumed effective management of the business from his father-in-law in the mid-1960s, until it was sold in 1976.

Since his shop was centrally located on Market Street, activists would not hesitate in using his business as a drop-off or collection point. On the strength of a note he received from Mosie Moolla, who was a detainee at Marshall Square Police Station in 1964, he

supplied a pair of shoes to a police officer as an inducement to effect the escape of Mosie, Abdulhay, Wolpe and Goldreich. Shirish Nanabhai recalls that, "Every child whose family was part of the struggle received their school clothes [free of charge] from Quarter's shop."

Joe Matthews (2009:53), a veteran of the ANC and SACP, described the role that Indian business owners in Johannesburg and Durban played in supporting the liberation movement during the 1950s. He mentioned Quarter thus: "In Johannesburg, to cite another example, you had New Reef Wholesalers and Ahmed Khota (Quarter) would make available to us goods from his shop."

Dasu Joseph (interview, 8/1/2003) reports that he was recruited by Wolfie Kodesh into an underground unit that included Quarter and Suliman "Babla" Saloojee. He recalls an incident when he and Quarter were putting up posters to announce the launch of MK:

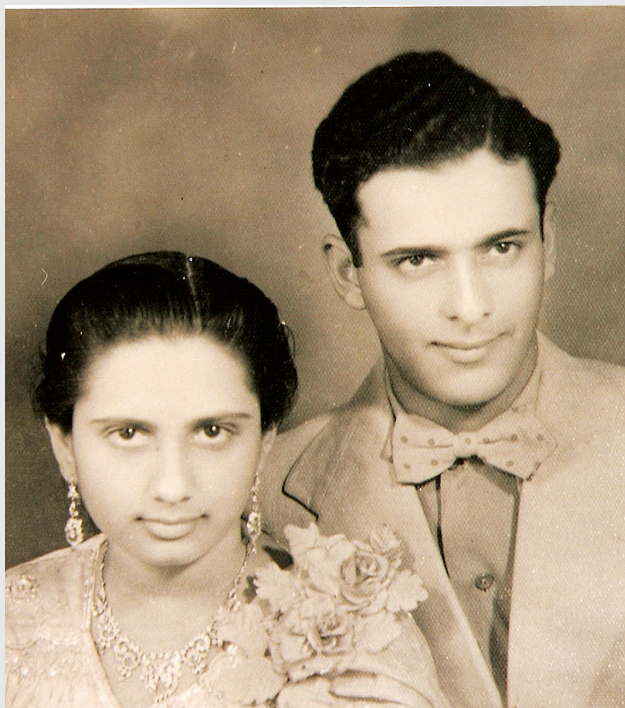
We went round Johannesburg and we were allocated an area whereby we were asked to stick up these posters. It was after we had been around Market Street and Diagonal Street, we were working down towards the pass offices in Avenue Road and the pass office was very, very dark and it was a very quiet evening. We went along to the walls of the pass offices that were facing the front and we began putting up these posters, Quarter stuck the glue onto the wall and I had the poster and spread it on. It was after we had completed that task and been around all over that we later discovered that when it was announced the following morning, we had put the posters up that night, that bombs went off simultaneously at the Fordsburg Post Office, the Johannesburg Pass Office where we had put

up the poster, the Portuguese Embassy, they all went up at the same time and a number of other buildings blew up. It was then that we learned that Ahmed Quarter and I would have been the first victims for MK because a bomb was planted right where we put up the posters and the guys who put it up there were watching us at the time and they couldn't signal to us that they had planted a bomb there.

Quarter also helped to store radio broadcast equipment for an attempted, but unsuccessful, broadcast by Wilton Mkwayi, who headed the Second National High Command of MK in 1964. He was detained for a short while at Rosebank Police Station during the 1960s in terms of security legislation.

Quarter was well known for an unsurpassed sense of humour, conviviality and generosity. He loved playing pranks on people who took themselves too seriously and possessed the gift for telling stories. Quarter's zest for life was also evident in his community work – raising funds for bursaries, initiating community projects, acting as go-between in numerous business and domestic conflicts and always providing a leg-up to business start-ups and families in need. The large and varied groups of people who came to pay their respects when he passed away on 17 June 2009 was testimony to his multifaceted character.

Quarter is survived by his wife Ayesha, two sons Mohammed and Yahya, two daughters Reihana and Nafissa, his nephew and niece Mohammed and Yumna, whom he raised as his own from infancy, and 17 grandchildren.



Quarter and his wife Ayesha



At his 70th birthday party in 1998 with Goolam Pahad and Kathy; grand daughters Mahdiya Coovadia & Azminah Mayet

Moosa “Mosie”

Moolla³¹



Mosie as a young child

Moosa “Mosie” Moolla – revolutionary, leader and democrat – has over the years paid a heavy price for his beliefs and principles. During the course of his life he was cruelly separated from his children, detained on numerous occasions, faced the prospect of spending many years behind bars and spent 28 years in exile.

Mosie was born in the small western Transvaal town of Christiana on 12 June 1934 where his father ran a successful import-export business. The family was forced to relocate to Bloemhof, a nearby

town, following the Great Depression of the 1930s. Mosie did his primary schooling in Bloemhof. Since there were no high schools catering for blacks, Mosie was forced to move to Johannesburg in 1949 to pursue his secondary education.

The exciting developments in national and international politics during this period sparked Mosie’s curiosity in current affairs. He recalls specifically the 1946-47 Passive Resistance Campaign against the Ghetto Act, India’s march to independence and the Indonesian struggle for freedom.

Boarding with a Congress stalwart, Mrs Ouma Bhayat, and surrounded by TIC activists such as Dr Vallabh Jaga, Dr Zainab Asvat and Dr Abdulhaq Patel, Mosie was recruited

into the newly launched TIYC. The very first campaign he actively participated in was the 1950 May Day strike in protest of the Suppression of Communism Act.

During this period the Picasso Club was formed for the purposes of writing political slogans on public walls. Among its members were Mosie, Ahmed Kathrada, Babla Saloojee, Faried Adams and Solly Esakjee. Mosie remembers one particular slogan painted on the all-white Johannesburg Public Library: "WE BLACK FOLKS WANT TO READ". This was removed by the authorities the next day, only to be replaced a short while later with "WE BLACK FOLKS AIN'T READING YET'". The Star newspaper carried the story and commented on the sloganeers' sense of humour.

Actively participating in the TIYC by silk-screening and putting up posters, writing and distributing leaflets, Mosie quickly moved up the ranks of the youth movement. In a short space of time he was elected to the organisation's executive committee and then as the joint honorary secretary and finally as chairman, a position he held for nearly a decade.

In his matriculation year, 1952, Mosie participated in the Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws and was imprisoned for close onto a month. Due to his detention, Mosie was expelled and could not write his matric exams.

At the beginning of the campaign for the Congress of the People (COP), the Congress movement requested Mosie to leave his administrative job in a manufacturing company in order to serve full time on the Secretariat of the National Action Council of the COP.

Most members of the Secretariat such as Walter Sisulu, Joe Slovo, Rusty Bernstein and Yusuf Cachalia were banned under



Molvi Cachalia with nineteen resisters from the Transvaal, March 1947

the Suppression of Communism Act. It therefore became Mosie's major responsibility to ensure that all decisions of the Secretariat were effectively conveyed to all provincial and regional committees of the National Action Council.

He served in this capacity until the culmination of the COP campaign with the adoption of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown on 25 and 26 June 1955. Mosie was later elected onto the executive of the TIC and also served as its full-time organiser.

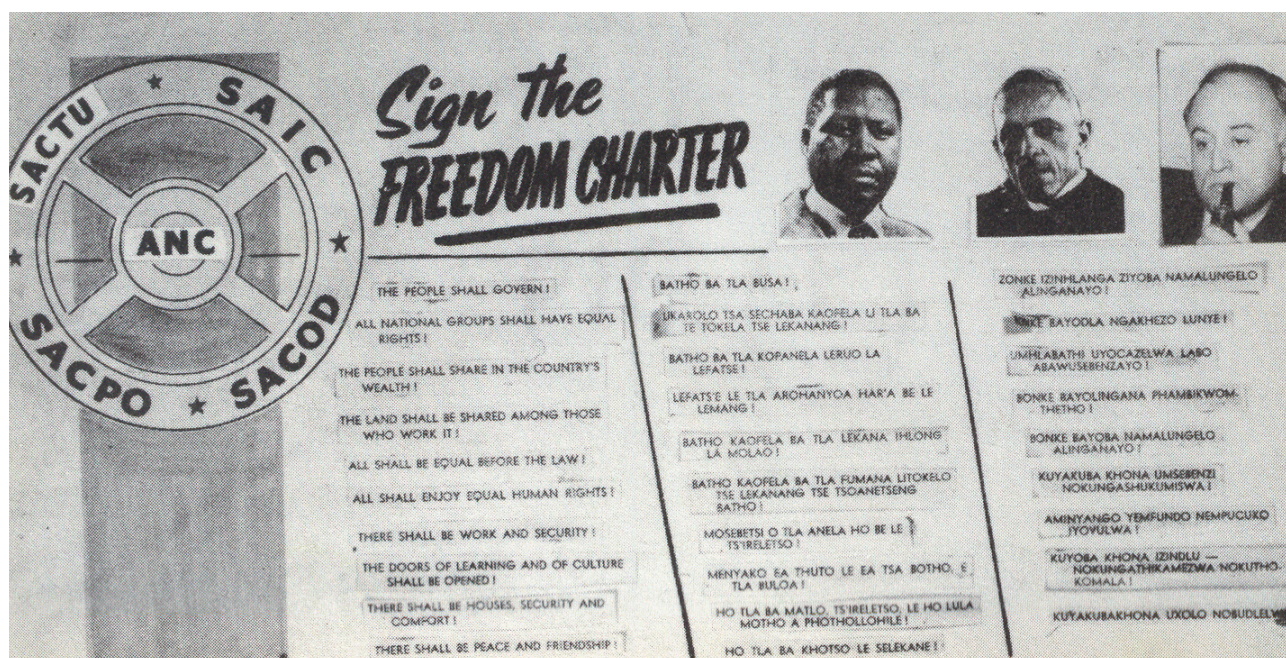
During December 1956 Mosie, along with 155 others, was arrested on the charge of high treason. He observed, "The accused represented virtually every strata of South African life – professionals, unskilled workers, peasants, atheists, the religious, artists, white, black, coloured and Indian." The Treason Trial exacted a heavy price on all; lives were disrupted, the daily burden of travel to the Special High Court in Pretoria and, tragically, in some instances the breaking up of family life.

He also recalls the support and acts of solidarity with the accused. Money for the bail was raised within hours. The women provided two meals everyday for five years, for all the accused, especially Mrs Thayanagie Pillay and Dr Zainab Asvat. There were crowds of supporters daily outside the court.

Mosie further emphasised that the state inadvertently brought together leaders such as Chief Luthuli, Professor ZK Matthews and Nelson Mandela and had created a forum for conferencing and robust political debate. He fondly remembers Vuyisile Mini's bass baritone when raised in song. Mini composed freedom songs, and was executed in November 1964 by the apartheid government.

Mosie was one of thirty – including Nelson Mandela, Helen Joseph, Ahmed Kathrada and Walter Sisulu – to see through the entire trial until 1961. Despite the prosecutors believing that they had a strong chance of conviction, they were all acquitted in March 1961, after being on trial for five years.

On the 10 May 1963 Mosie was amongst the first to be detained under the newly promulgated 90-day detention law. He was held in solitary confinement at Marshall Square Police Station. He later escaped from the police station along with Abdulhay Jassat, Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich. Mosie then, illegally left the country, and made his way to Dar es Salaam, which housed the exiled leadership of the ANC.

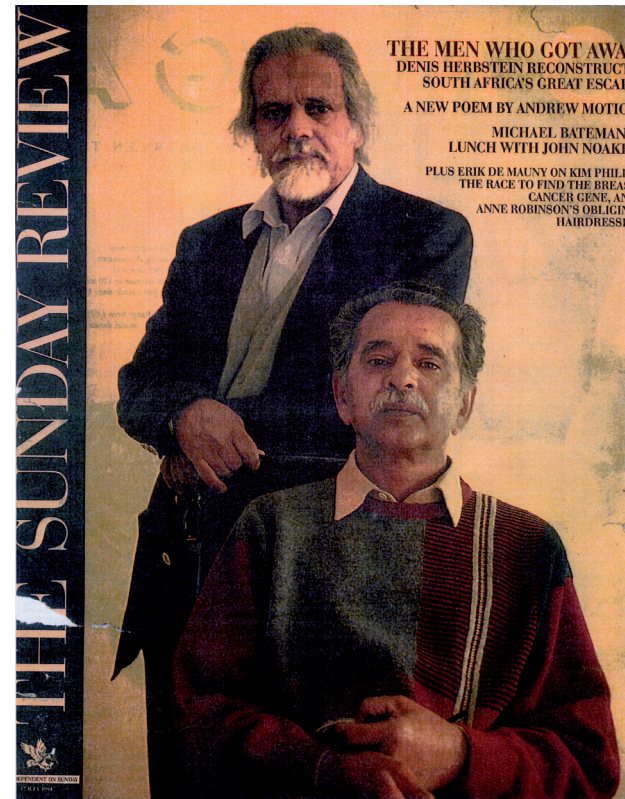


The Freedom Charter was adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, June 1955

In 1964 Mosie joined Umkhonto we Sizwe and in 1965 was sent for a year to Odessa in the then Soviet Union for military training. His was the second unit to be sent to Odessa and his group included Josiah Jele (who served on the ANC's NEC), Peter Tladi and Jacqueline Molefe who, after 1994, became a major general in the SANDF. In 1966, after Odessa, Mosie went to Moscow for a six-month stint in intelligence training. On his return to Dar es Salaam, he continued his work within the ANC's Department of Publicity and Information as editor of *Spotlight on South Africa*.

From the time of his escape in 1963 until 1968 the apartheid state denied Mosie's wife Zubeida, and their children, Tasneem and Azaad, passports. Finally in 1968, they were granted passports and travelled by train to Lusaka, Zambia. Mosie joined them for a few days at Tunduma, at the Tanzania-Zambia border. This was the first time that Mosie saw his son, who was born two months after he fled the country. Azaad was now five years old, and his daughter, Tasneem was six years old. After the brief reunion Mosie returned to Dar es Salaam and Zubeida to Lusaka with the children. Zubeida, could not obtain a work permit in Zambia, was forced to send the children back to South Africa to live with her parents because she could not support them. This separation was very painful for all of them.

In 1969 Mosie was deployed to Bombay to work amongst South African students studying in India. The ANC's Asian mission was located in New Delhi with Mendi Msimang as its chief representative and Molvi Cachalia as the deputy chief representative. In 1971 Molvi Cachalia retired and Mosie was appointed in his place. In 1972 Mendi was transferred to Tanzania and Mosie took over as chief representative.



The story of Mosie's escape with Abdulhay Jassat, Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich was featured in the Sunday Review, Sunday Independent in 1994

In 1978, Mosie was sent to head the ANC's Egypt and Middle East mission. He was also concurrently the ANC representative to the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO). In 1982 he was reposted to New Delhi. In November 1989 he was deployed as the ANC representative to the World Peace Council and had to relocate to Helsinki, Finland.

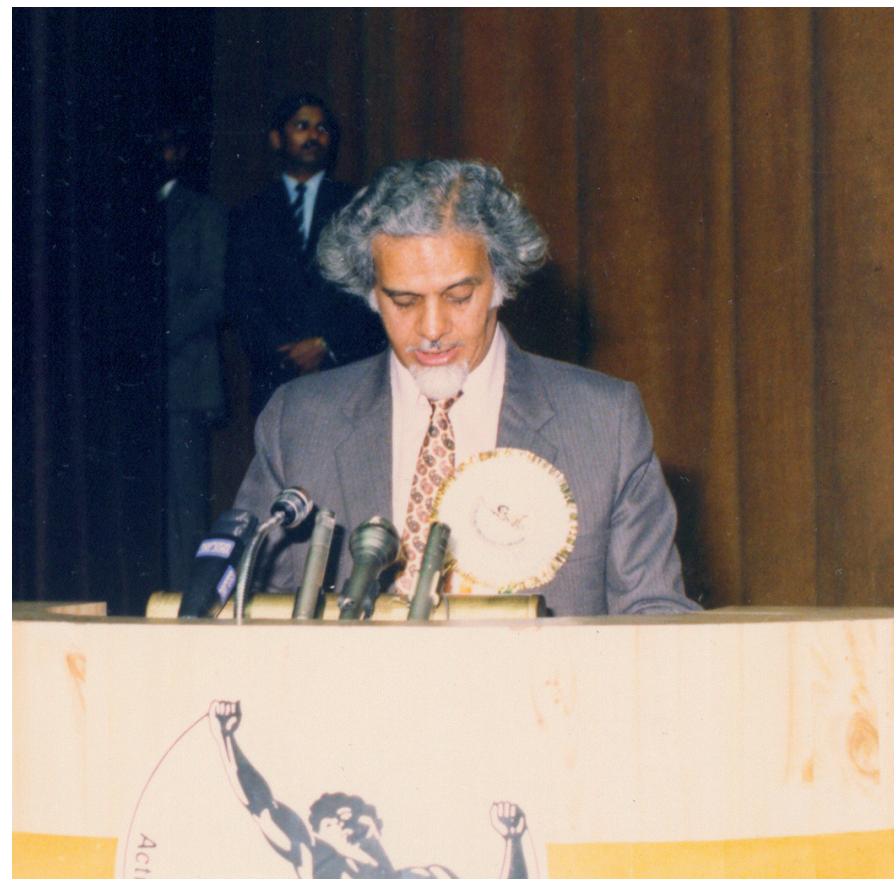
In December 1990, after 28 years in exile, Mosie returned to South Africa. He was employed by the ANC's Department of International Affairs based in Shell House. In 1991 he was



Photo taken in Tunduma, at the Tanzania and Zambia border: L-R: Alibhai, a friend, Zubeida, Mosie and their children Tasneem and Azad, 1968

elected as secretary of the TIC and served as a member of the TIC/NIC delegation to CODESA.

In 1995, President Mandela appointed Mosie as the South African ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran. He held the post until 1999. From June 2000 until 2004 Mosie was appointed as high commissioner to Pakistan.



Mosie addressing the International Youth Conference Against Apartheid, New Delhi, India, January 1987

Zubeida (nee Saloojee), Mosie's wife and life-long partner passed away on 3 April 2008. They were married for close to 47 years. Besides Tasneem and Azaad, he has another son, Afzal, who was born in New Delhi, India in 1972. Nelson Mandela gave his daughter, Tasneem her middle name Nobandla, which means "she of the masses".

Peter Moonsammy³²



Peter Moonsammy was born on 25 March 1928 in Market St, Johannesburg, the elder brother of Paul and Dasu Joseph. He went to work as a bellboy at the age of fourteen to help support a family of eleven siblings after his father died.

The Joseph brothers were intimately involved in resistance politics dating back to the 1940s in the Young Communist League, the Communist Party of South

Africa and the Transvaal Indian Congress. They were part of many of the major campaigns of the late 1940s and 1950s.

During the 1960s, the Joseph brothers played critical roles during that period. Paul was closely tied to the underground and led one of four MK structures operating in the Fordsburg area. Dasu (Dasu Joseph interview, 8/1/2003) reports that Wolfie Kodesh recruited him, Ahmed Essop "Quarter" Khota and Suliman "Babla" Saloojee into an underground unit. However, the unit was not directly involved in sabotage as such. Dasu also worked very closely with Mac Maharaj on the propaganda and printing side.

It is also clear that Peter was an important part of the support network for MK cadres operating at the time. When Abdulhay Jassat and Mosie Moolla escaped from Marshall Square, they happened to come across Peter, who had just returned from work in the early hours of the morning. He drove them to a safe house. He also hid Walter Sisulu at his home for three weeks during that time.

Much later, Kista Moonsamy reported that Peter came to see him when he was in hiding in 1964 in the then eastern Transvaal to inform him that it was safe for him to surface.

During the dark and difficult days of apartheid, there was constant contact between the Moonsammy and Mandela families, as described by Hassen Lorgat (2007:7-8) in his obituary to Peter:

... Madiba writes in his letter to the [Moonsammy] family from Robben Island (4 June 1985: "I wonder whether Zindzi ever noticed my embarrassment last year when she told me in passing that you and Doreen had, for several years now, looked after her as her own parents, often driving all the way to Soweto. ...

She had taken it for granted that I knew all about this and, when asked for particulars, she literally glowed with pure joy, as she gave me chapter and verse. ...

Madiba continues to write that "I often talked of your mother's ever cheerfulness and wonderful sense of humour, about Darley and Pakiry, Violet and Letchmee. ... I often remembered your smiling face as we met in Avenue Road or elsewhere in the City. But the grim walls of prison kept me ignorant of your trips to Soweto.

The chance remark by Zindzi completely changed the picture; it gave me an entirely different image of you and Doreen and I was seized by an acute sense of guilt when I became aware of just how greatly indebted we are to you. I sincerely look forward to seeing you and Doreen when I hope to embrace you most warmly for the good things you have done."

During the 1980s, Peter was a staunch supporter of the Transvaal Indian Congress and United Democratic Front. After the ANC was unbanned, he joined the Lenasia branch and actively supported its activities.

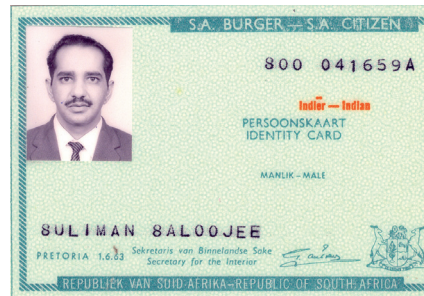
Peter died on 25 September 2007 at the age of 79 after few months' illness. In his obituary, Hassen Lorgat (2007:6) said: "When we talk of Peter we will not talk of paper certificates or qualifications but a man who brought out the true humanity and virtues of the working person and the oppressed in practice. He lived the values of love, modesty, tolerance, caring and sharing, and solidarity. ... He was a man without malice and characterised by a deep desire to serve others and his community."

He is survived by his wife Doreen, his children Kalie, Tony, Roshnie, Soobs, Rookie and Monty and grandchildren Anjuli, Kamugelo Naidoo, Mellisa, Ian, Deverani, Primithi, Anjeni, Desigan, Joshua, Simeon, Adrienne and Hannah.



Funeral Service Programme

Suliman “Babla” Saloojee³³



Suliman “Babla” Saloojee’s Identity Card

When comrades and friends of Suliman “Babla” Saloojee remember him, they usually reminisce about his humour, daring and cheeky insouciance towards the apartheid authorities; and their voices strain with a longing and sadness for a dearly missed comrade.

Babla was born on 5 February 1931 in the small town of Belfast in the then eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga). Like many young children of that time he was compelled to leave home in order to gain a basic education.

Babla was a well-known figure in TIC and TIYC circles. During the 1950s, he was a member of the Picasso Club, along with Ahmed Kathrada, Mosie Moolla, Abdulhay Jassat and Farid Adam, which spent many nights painting political slogans and putting up posters. He also participated in the major campaigns of the day such as the Defiance Campaign

Although he worked as a legal clerk, he often presented himself as a qualified lawyer when his comrades were in trouble with the police. He was able to quickly trace the whereabouts of detainees, arrange legal assistance and arrange for essential provisions.

He was known to have assisted in smuggling a number of people out of the country. He assisted his close friends Abdulhay and Mosie in successfully leaving the country despite a massive manhunt for the two escaped detainees.

Babla was detained on the night of his engagement to Rookie Adam in 1961. In February 1964 he was served with a banning order. On 6 July 1964 Babla, along with Ahmed Essop "Quarter" Khota, was arrested and taken to Marshall Square. His wife, Rookie who he married on 1 July 1962, recalls that the last time she saw him he had a bandage on his head. When she tried to inquire as to what happened the visit was cut short.

It is widely believed that on 9 September 1964 he was severely tortured, killed and thrown out of the seventh floor window. (a height of 20m) of Gray's Building, the Special Branch headquarters in Johannesburg. He was the fourth person to die in police custody. The inquest found that the cause of death was unknown, but to this day the suspicion lingers that he was murdered. He was 32 years old.

The most emotive and heartfelt tribute to Babla was written by his close friend Ahmed Kathrada:

Suliman Saloojee, my dearest friend Babla, was dead, killed by the police. This most gentle of men, this inveterate prankster, my comrade and source of strength, had been picked up under the ninety-day detention law, brutally interrogated and tortured to death - by the



Babla and Rookie Saloojee

sadistic Rooi Rus Swanepoel - then flung from a window on the seventh floor of Gray's Building, Johannesburg headquarters of the security police, on Wednesday 9 September 1964.

Not surprisingly, the so-called inquest accepted the police version that Babla had committed suicide by jumping to his death. I have never doubted, however, that he died under interrogation, and that his body was then thrown out of the window... The magistrate found that 'nothing in the evidence suggested that Saloojee had been assaulted or that methods of interrogating him were in any way irregular. He found that no one was to blame for his death. (Kathrada 2004: 207)



Babla's funeral, September 1964

Events

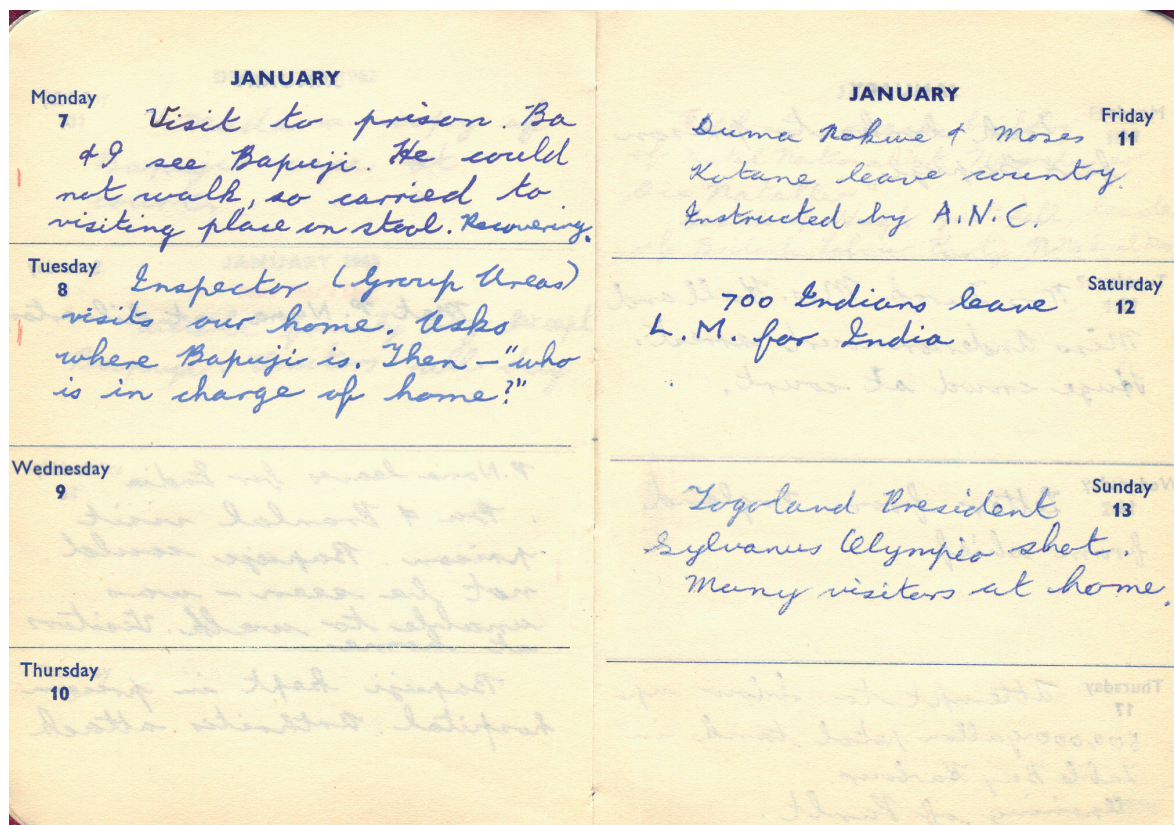
Maniben's diary³⁴

Nana Sita was a leader of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) in the 1950s. On 26 June 1952, he and Walter Sisulu were the joint leaders of the first batch of defiers who went into Boksburg location without permits and were sentenced. He was persecuted by the apartheid regime in the early 1960s for refusing to move from his home and business in Hercules – a suburb of Pretoria that was declared white in terms of the Group Areas Act – to the newly established township of Laudium.

Indeed, Abdulhay Jassat, Yusuf Isaacs and Tommy Vassen bombed the house allocated to Nana Sita on Jewel St as a protest against the notorious legislation and to prolong his stay in Hercules. Nana Sita's daughter Maniben recalls that Solly Nathie – an activist of the TIC – phoned her either on the day before or on the day of the bombing asking about the address of the house allocated to her father. Over the years, she remained convinced that he was directly involved in the attack, which was not the case.

Maniben was born on 24 December 1926. She lived with her father during those difficult days and was very politically aware and active. In order to protect four valuable documents from the constant police raids that they faced, Maniben decided to sew a cushion containing a booklet entitled "I accuse! Speeches to Court by Nelson Mandela", a leaflet entitled "The South African Group Areas Act and Mr Nana Sita", a booklet entitled "South Africa's Treason Trial" and a copy of her 1963 diary.

In 2008, Maniben decided to give Nelson Mandela a gift for his 90th birthday. She thought of the cushion and remembered that it contained his speech at the dock. Somehow, she forgot that it also contained her diary, where she recorded the major political issues of the day. When the gift was received, it was opened and the documents were retrieved and now form part of the Maniben Sita collection at the archives of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.



Maniben's diary: "Bapuji" is Gujarati for father. She is referring to Nana Sita who is in jail

Longest night³⁵

Indres Naidoo, who was arrested with Reggie Vandeyar and Shirish Nanabhai, describes the night of their arrest on 17 April 1963. A police informer named Gammat Jardine betrayed them. Indres relates their experience in 1986, 23 years after the event occurred.

When Reggie got back into the unit a man approached him in his house and offered to sell him a box of dynamite.

At that stage it was very difficult get hold of the dynamite and in every region an instruction was given to try and find dynamite. Reggie of course naturally told this man that he is not interested, but informed the unit. The region was informed and promised to investigate this man whose name is Gammat Jardien. After three months of investigation they found that Gammat Jardien stayed in Booyens, was a petty crook with tremendous knowledge in the use of dynamite. The region thought not only should we buy the dynamite from him but we also try to recruit him. Reggie talked to him

and found him a very willing person and was keen to join MK. He was then recruited and introduced to me and Shirish.



Press cutting on Gammat Jardine

We had a number of political discussions with him and also pointed out frankly to him that as a MK we were very naïve in the use of explosives. He then promised to teach us and we later went out for experiments.

I remember one time going to a farm about 15km north of TJ. Gammat Jardien merely took out the dynamite, stuck it onto a tree and lit it. It felled a tree. We were impressed with how he felled that tree. He then showed us how to go about it. Then 1963 came along. Gammat Jardien had shown us a very good target near a Coloured township called Riverlea. We went over to the target and observed it and reported to the region. The region fully agreed that it should be our next target and decided that we should go on the next job on the 16th April 1963. Everything was planned but for some strange reason that I can't recall, at the last minute the region decided that we should postpone it for the next day.

Gammat came on the agreed time with his car and the dynamite and we informed him of the postponement. Gammat seemed very anxious and disappointed and tried to persuade us to tackle the job as planned. We explained that when the region takes a decision it is final. He then persuaded us to go and check the area and the target again. We got to the scene, everything was planned, where we'd stop, how we were going to move, etc we then observed the target again.

After our reconnaissance, on our return as we were coming down to Bree Street we heard a knock in the car. We stopped and thought that it could be a serious problem as we needed a car for the job the following day. I walked home while Gammat took the other two comrades home, (it was on his

route) in his broken down car. The following day, the 17th April we prepared ourselves to go on the job. Shirish and I attended a meeting earlier that evening and from the meeting we went to Doornfontein. I put on jeans, a black jersey and gloves. We left home at about eleven in the evening and I remember my mother asking where I was going to that time of the night.



The car used to drive to the Riverlea Station

We went to where Reggie was working as a waiter and he immediately informed us that he was not happy with the behaviour of Gammat Jardien. We were very surprised that he could give us the assurance that the car would be fixed. And indeed as we were talking he arrived with the car fixed as promised. He told us he took the car in the early morning and told them that he wanted it before five and got it. All three

of us got into a car and drove to Reggie's home. Reggie and myself got off and went into the house. Reggie gave me a rod to keep and told me with the first false move Gammat make I must hit him very hard. At that time Reggie was a very big guy, he weighed almost 200lbs, not fat, this was all muscle. We then agreed that if anything happened, Reggie would be the guy to lead the attack on him. We returned to the car and moved towards Riverlea. We parked the car as planned and got out. Shirish and I went to the signal post, Gammat went to the tool shed and Reggie stood guard approximately 10-15 metres away. Suddenly there was a strange noise, a long hooters sound. We all looked up. The sound died and yet there was no car in sight. The main road was about 150 metres away from where we were and no one could see a car passing. Nevertheless we wrote it off as some passing car. We then decided to go on with the job and as I was fixing the dynamite to the signal post we noticed that Gammat had made a little fire near the tool shed. I shouted at him, asking him what the hell he was doing. Reggie on the other hand became impatient and shouted at me to light "bloody" fuse. I lit the fuse; as I lit it we heard a police whistle. Reggie shouted, telling us to run for our lives. We ran, I jumped a fence of more than one metre in my attempt to get away.

We ran to where Reggie was and the three of us, noticing that Gammat Jardien was not around, searched for him but Gammat had disappeared. As we were approaching the car the whole place lit up. It was like broad daylight and the last thing we heard was "stop, put up your hands." All of us stopped simultaneously. A revolver went off and my hand was hit. I did not realise that I was shot. It was only later when I saw blood that I realised I was shot. We were surrounded by dozens of policeman wearing railway balaclavas.



The toolshed

It was early April and it was bitterly cold. We were asked what we were doing there at that time of the night. All of us, without hesitation, replied we'd come with Gammat Jardien. They asked us where Gammat Jardien was and we told them that his sister lived in Riverlea and he had gone to her as we were having a problem with our car. A cop was sent to look for Gammat but came back within a minute saying there was no Gammat. At that point the explosion went off. It went off with a tremendous bang and Swanepoel shouted *"Ahah, Mandela se soldate"* (Ahah, Mandela's soldiers).

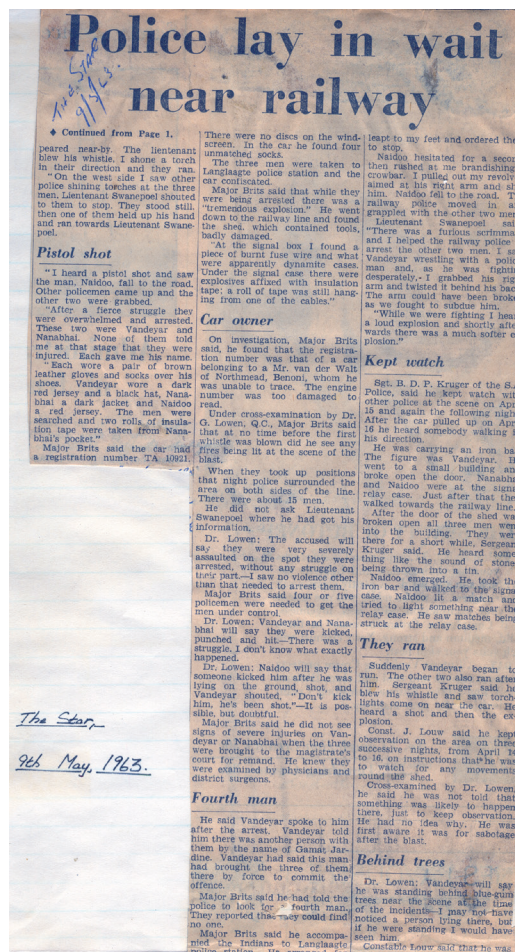
They then stuck into us. I was first in line and they hit me down. Reggie tried to protest asking them if they could not see that I'd been shot. *"Hey koelie jy is harde bek ne?"* with that they brought him down. They then worked on him breaking a couple of his ribs. We were bundled into cars

and taken to the police station. At the police station my hand became swollen. It felt as if the whole arm from the shoulder was collapsing on me. I pleaded for a doctor or to be taken to the hospital, but they refused, telling me *"Hey you gonna die here"*. The policeman in charge later made a call (presumably consulting some senior) and when he came back said *"Vat die koelie hospital toe"*. I was taken by about four policemen who literally picked me up and threw me in to a pick-up van. At Coronationville Hospital the doctor, who was a very nice guy, had to tear my clothing off and then he saw the bullet sticking out just next to the shoulder blade. The bullet entered through my arm and passed on to between the shoulder blades where it got stuck. All the doctor did was to pull it out using a tweezer. He ordered that I be admitted but the cops refused. He then asked them to sign the document stating that they were taking full responsibility because as far as he was concerned I was to be hospitalised. He, I want to emphasise, was very pleasant. He gave me some painkillers, which they took away later.

When we returned to the police station Reggie and Shirish were not there. The next I heard was their screams. I heard them pleading: *"Please help, leave me. I don't know anything."* I realised that these chaps were being beaten up and I thought to myself: *"My God, I'm next."* When Shirish came out of that room, I couldn't recognise him his face was battered. He couldn't even put his glasses on. Reggie could hardly walk. They put us all into separate cars and I was taken home. When we got to Doornfontein the cops just started banging the door. My two brothers, two sisters and my mother were shocked when they saw me. I was in very bad shape and my family demanded an explanation. They started their search, cutting open pillows and mattresses.

They broke the tiles of the fireplace looking for arms and ammunition. On finding the book I earlier referred to they remarked "Oh, so you are reading guerrilla warfare." They also found lots of letters. Mac Maharaj was staying at my place and ran a newspaper called *Parade*. In fact it was one of our papers. Mac was the editor and the sole journalist. They went

through all those letters, which included letters to SANROC and other sporting organisations and took them away. During all this my family became very agitated and refused to let the cops to sit down. I was taken back to Marshall Square, locked in a cell all by myself, with no blankets and I was in terrible pain. It was the longest night in my life.



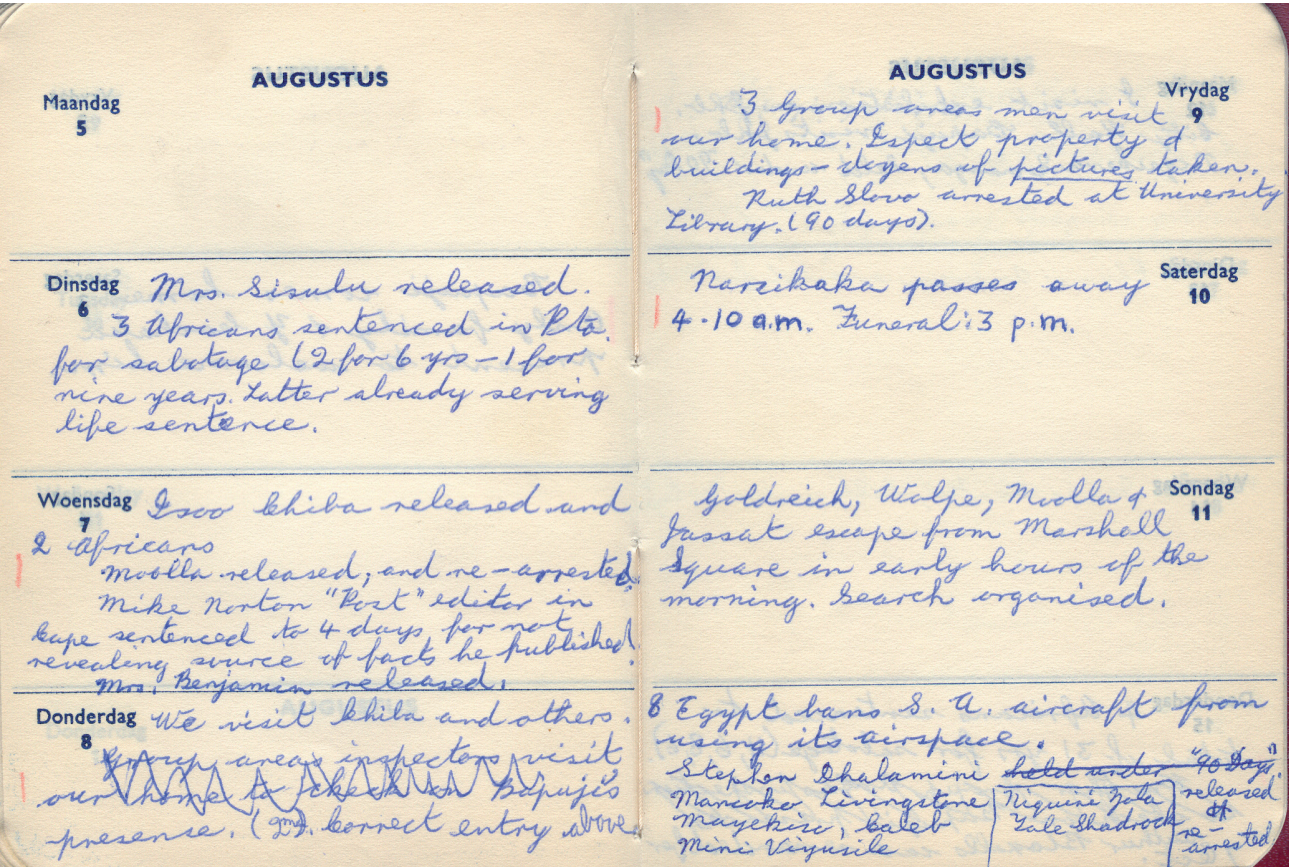
Press cuttings of the arrest

Escape from Marshall Square³⁶

On the morning of 11 August 1963 at about 2am, four men, friends and comrades, found themselves reluctantly compelled to part ways. Having just escaped from the infamous Marshall Square police station in central Johannesburg they were aware that the security establishment would launch a massive

manhunt for them. What they were unaware of was the inspiration and legend their escape would trigger in the years to come.

Standing in front of the Johannesburg Public Library on Market Street, Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe chose to go north to Hillbrow while Abdulhay Jassat and Moosa "Mosie" Moolla went west towards Fordsburg.



On 11 August Maniben Sita notes the escape in her diary



Marshall Square

A few months before, Abdulhay Jassat and Laloo “Isu” Chiba were arrested on suspicion of sabotage and were severely tortured. When the state’s case of sabotage against them collapsed, they were transferred to Marshall Square under the 90-day detention law.

Arthur Goldreich and his wife Hazel were the owners of the Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, where MK had its secret headquarters. During the raid on Rivonia on 11 July 1963, police arrested Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba Rusty Bernstein, Ahmed Kathrada, Bob Hepple, Arthur Goldreich and his wife Hazel. They also arrested all the farm labourers and domestic workers.

Harold Wolpe had handled the purchase of Liliesleaf Farm and had a copy of disciplinary procedures for MK cadres in his handwriting.

Mosie Moolla was amongst the first 90-day detainees at Marshall Square. A leader and high profile activist in the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC) the police suspected that he had knowledge of the sabotage and bombings that had taken place in the Fordsburg area.

The three Indians, Abdulhay, Mosie and Isu, were kept in isolation cells while Goldreich and Wolpe were incarcerated in the white section, which was separated by bars from the Indian section. They were able to communicate when sympathetic warders looked the other way. They began discussing the idea of escape.

At first the detainees tried to file through the bars of the prison. AnnMarie Wolpe, wife of Harold, smuggled in over 20 hacksaw blades concealed in food to the detainees. The detainees found these to be ineffective and feared that a search of their cells would compromise AnnMarie and discarded the plan.

One day a smiling and friendly 18-year-old constable named Johan Greeff was assigned to the front desk, bordering the cells that held Mosie, Abdulhay and Isu. Without an understanding of the type of detainees being held Greeff began to befriend them. Greeff found the detainees charming, engaging and generous when the need arose.

The detainees slowly and deliberately began to cultivate a friendship with Greeff. There was, however, not unanimity among the detainees in using Greeff to facilitate an escape. Isu objected on the basis that the likeable Greeff would face a beating and imprisonment once the escape was executed.

“to use in any way he saw fit”. The four detainees recognised that they had the bait to put their plan into action.

Since Abdulhay and Mosie had developed a closer relationship with Greeff, the four decided that they should approach Greeff with the bribe. One evening Mosie and Abdulhay invited Greeff into Mosie’s cell and asked Greeff to take the oath that, “Die wat ons hier praat is tussen ons drie, die vier meere en die Here (What we are about to talk about is between three of us, these four walls and the Lord.)” Abdulhay traced a figure of two thousand pounds on the wall then asked Greeff to assist them to escape. Greeff said he would consider the offer.

Two days later Abdulhay and Mosie approached Greeff again and doubled the offer. Greeff had his eye on a top of the range Studebaker Lark, which he knew he could not afford on his meagre salary. Suddenly the car seemed like a possibility and he accepted the offer.

Despite the real possibility of Greeff betraying them and the trepidation that the detainees felt about placing their fate in a policeman’s hand, they immediately began to put the plan into action.

It was decided that escape would happen at midnight on a Friday night. The detainees informed Greeff that he would go to Goldreich’s cell and, as part of the deception, be hit over the head and relieved of his keys. Arrangements were made for Greeff to collect the money from Isu’s house after the escape. Transport was arranged for the detainees once they walked out of the prison.

Unfortunately, due to the volume of people being processed through the charge office the plan had to be postponed to the

Saturday night. On the night of the escape, at the appointed time, the detainees anxiously watched midnight pass without any sighting of Greeff. With a mounting sense of desperation and alarm the detainees could do nothing but wait for Greeff.

At 1am Greeff came into the cells and informed the detainees that a trio of drunks whom he had to process had delayed him. He then let the detainees out of the gates of the exercise yards into the car park.

Having separated at the Johannesburg Public Library, Wolpe and Goldreich had a stroke of good fortune. Looking for phone in Joubert Park they came across the sympathetic theatre director Barney Simon. He drove them to his place from which they made arrangements with Mannie Brown to smuggle them out of the country.

Mannie moved them to a safe house, bought an unmarked second-hand car and got a sympathetic student to drive them to Swaziland. During the entire six-hour journey to Swaziland, Wolpe and Goldreich travelled in the boot of the car. From Swaziland they were disguised as priests and flown to the then relative safety of Bechuanaland (now Botswana).

Abdulhay and Mosie continued to make their way to Fordsburg. They came across Peter Moonsammy (also known as Peter Joseph), a fellow activist and comrade, on his way home from his job as a waiter. Peter drove them first to Herby Pillay’s flat, then to Tommy Vassen’s place and eventually to Said Cachalia’s home where they found safe accommodation

After three days, Mosie decided to go to Magaliesburg and Abdulhay went to stay at his aunt’s farm in Vereeniging,



where he stayed for two weeks, only coming out at night when all the other people had gone to sleep and it was considered safe.

Two weeks later, Abdulhay, disguised as a pious Muslim woman in purdah (veil), was driven to the Bechuanaland border by Moosa Angamia. Seven weeks later Mosie was also smuggled out of the country by Moosa Angamia and his good friend Suliman "Babla" Saloojee.

The apartheid government, embarrassed at losing four detainees, offered a reward of five thousand pounds and launched a massive manhunt. This was in vain because the four had successfully made their way out of the country.

For Johan Greeff the incident exacted a heavy toll. His Station Commander was immediately suspicious of Greeff's role in the escape. Upon cross-questioning Greeff confessed that he was to receive money. For his role in the escape Greeff served two of the six years he was sentenced to. After 1994 Mosie and Abdulhay, with the support of Walter Sisulu, lobbied the ANC to settle the debt they owed to Greeff. Greeff was eventually paid about R100 000 by the ANC.

The success of the escape of Arthur, Abdulhay, Harold and Mosie should not only be measured by their personal freedom but the inspiration that it served for activists and members of the movement during that dark period.

Songs

Pinjre ke panchhi³⁷

The Hindi song – Pinjre ke panchhi re – sung by Kavi Pradeep for the film Naagmani (1957), directed by Raman B Desai, music by Avinash Vyas and lyrics by Kavi Pradeep, was very popular with activists who were detained and imprisoned in the late 1950s and 1960s because it tells of the pain of the caged bird.

Ahmed Kathrada, in one of his letters from Pollsmoor Maximum Prison, dated 25 March 1989, tells his correspondent, Mrs Zuleikha Mayat: “Your reference to Iqbal’s poem about the bird in the cage lamenting over freedom reminded me of the well-known song ‘Pingre ke panchi re, tera dard ne jane kooi’. ... (For Censors: ‘No one knows the agony of the bird in the cage’.)” (Vahed and Waetjen 2009:261)

Pinjre ke panchhi re, tera dard na jaane koye

Baahar se to khaamosh rahe tu

Bheetar bheetar roye re

Kah na sake tu, apni kahani

Teri bhi panchhi, kya zindagaani re

Vidhi ne teri katha likhi aansoo mein kalam duboye

Chupke chupke, rone waale

Rakhna chhipaake, dil ke chhale re

Ye patthar ka desh hai pagle, koyi na tera hoye

Caged bird oh, no one knows your pain

Outwardly you remain silent

Inwardly/within you weep

You were not able to tell your tale

Oh bird what a life you lead

Fate wrote your story with her pen dipped in tears)

You who cry silently

Keep hidden, the state of your heart

This is a land of stone fool/crazy-one, no one will be yours

Parna janda³⁸

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the song Parna janda was popular with activists in the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) and Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC). Indeed, a TIYC publication of October 1961 entitled Songs ...for you to sing, provided the following background to the song: "After the massacre at Jallian-walla-bagh, Amritsar, India, in 1919, where 379 men, women and children were killed in cold-blood and hundreds wounded, this song was composed and dedicated to those martyrs who laid down their lives in the cause of India's freedom. The theme of the song is: Keep the banner of freedom flying." (TIYC 1961:4)

Two decades later, the song was revived by the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee that campaigned against the elections of the South African Indian Council in 1981 and by the Transvaal Indian Congress after its revival on 1 May 1983, during its campaign against the tricameral Parliament. Khalil Saloojee, a veteran of the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign, revived the song at packed public meetings and rallies.

Bazi e jane ispe lagana (repeat)

Parna janda na niche jookana (3)

Ye mehnat ka soonka sahara (repeat)

Jisne chamka diya he sitara,

Ispe aa e mosseebut oothana

Parna janda na niche jookana (3)

Ye mazdoore ki he e nishani (repeat)

Jis ki darde bari he kahani,

Ye rahe to rahe zindagani

Wo jooke to mitado jawani,

Ooski soorkhi ka khoonse barana,

To na janda na niche jookana (3)

Jab azaadi ki bhook lagi thi (repeat)

To goliyawn Jalyan me challi thi

Yad ho goliyawn ka wo khana

To na janda na niche jookana (3)

Oon shahidon ki kabraw pe jana (repeat)

Phoole aansoo ke oonper charana

Oon ke harsal jalse manana

Jispe khoonki kahani soonana

Soonker kaanpe ka zalim zamana

Parna janda na niche jookana (3)

Put your whole being into this
struggle

But don't allow your spirit to be
conquered

This is the fruit of our labour

It is the shining star of our existence

For this we must bear all hardships

But we won't allow our spirit to be conquered

This is the symbol of the workers

Whose tale is filled with sorrow

What is youth

To achieve our goal we will sacrifice our lives

We will colour our lives with our blood

But we won't allow our spirit to be conquered

When we cried out in hunger for freedom

Bullets tore our flesh

We remember being fed with those bullets

But we won't allow our spirit to be conquered

Go to the graves of those martyrs

And strew them with wreaths of tears

Commemorate their sacrifices every year

And tell the tales written with their blood

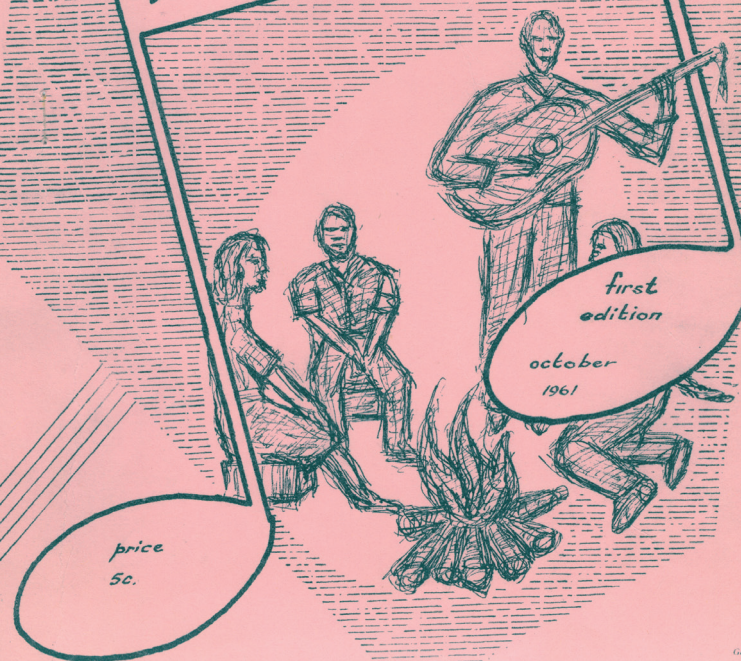
So that the oppressors will tremble

But we won't allow our spirit to be conquered

transvaal indian youth congress

presents...

SONGS ... FOR YOU TO SING



Songbook of the TIYC with various freedom songs

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Endnotes

- 1 Rashid Seedat wrote this chapter from a variety of secondary sources.
- 2 “Coolie” (or Koelie in Afrikaans) was the derogatory word for Indians during apartheid.
- 3 Official statistics under apartheid actually recorded demographics for Asians, which included the small number of people of Chinese descent.
- 4 He later acquired the honorific “Mahatma” meaning “Great Soul”.
- 5 Rashid Seedat wrote this chapter.
- 6 Isu Chiba and Bobby Vassen both recall that Bobby was part of Reggie’s unit for a short time but Reggie has no recollection of this.
- 7 Mac Maharaj provided this information.
- 8 Paul Joseph declined participation in this initiative.
9. This pen portrait is based on a joint interview with Djamilla Cajee and Iqbal Cajee conducted by Shabir Ballim on 11 October 2009; and the following secondary sources: SADET (2007), Kathrada (2004) and O’ Malley (2007).
10. This pen portrait is substantially based on Laloo Chiba’s own unpublished account of his life entitled “Brief family history and thumbnail portrait of Laloo ‘Isu’ Chiba,” completed in 2008. Supplementary information was gleaned from an interview with Laloo Chiba conducted on 23 October 2009. This account was compiled and edited by Rashid Seedat.
- 11 Coincidentally, there were four women named Luxmi in Isu’s family, viz. one of his sisters, his wife, his brother Raman’s wife and his father’s second wife.
- 12 This pen portrait is based on an interview conducted with Mrs Narsee Chhiba on 19 November 2009 and information provided by Laloo Chiba; Shabir Ballim wrote it.
- 13 This pen portrait is based on an interview conducted with Yusuf Isaacs on 23 November 2009; Shabir Ballim wrote it.

- 14 This pen portrait is based on an interview conducted with Shirish Nanabhai on 19 November 2009; Shabir Ballim wrote it.
- 15 This pen portrait is based on an interview conducted with Abdulhay Jassat on 18 July 2009; Taryn Mackay wrote it.
- 16 This pen portrait is principally based on Ahmed Kathrada's *Memoirs* (2004); Razia Saleh compiled it.
- 17 This pen portrait is based on interviews conducted with Wolfie Kodesh, on 3 March 1990 by Howard Barrell; and on 4 October 2000 by Moses Muziandile Hadebe for the ANC/University of Connecticut Oral History project; Lerato Motale Makgobatbu wrote it.
- 18 This pen portrait is principally based on Padraig O'Malley's *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the struggle for South Africa* (2007); it was compiled by Razia Saleh.
- 19 Isu Chiba compiled this pen portrait.
- 20 This pen portrait is based on an interview conducted with Kista Moonsamy on 6 October 2009; Shabir Ballim wrote it.
- 21 Isu Chiba contends that the decision could have only come from Solly Vania who was the leader of the unit.
- 22 This pen portrait is based on various interviews conducted with Indres Naidoo and Gabriele Blankenburg and other secondary sources; Razia Saleh wrote it.
- 23 This pen portrait is based on an interview conducted with Shirish Nanabhai on 2 July 2009, Taryn Mackay wrote it.
- 24 This pen portrait is based on a piece written by Faker Salie on his life and involvement in MK entitled "Document requested by Essu Chibba regarding events related to my involvement with Umkhonto we Sizwe"; Rashid Seedat edited it.
- 25 This pen portrait is based on interviews conducted with Reggie Vandeyar on 8 July 2009, 31 July 2009 and 13 October 2009; Taryn Mackay wrote it.

- 26 Laloo Chiba compiled this pen portrait; and Rashid Seedat edited it.
- 27 This pen portrait is based on a piece written by Bobby Vassen on his life and involvement in MK entitled “Bobby Vassen pen portrait”; Lerato Motale Makgobatbu edited it.
- 28 This pen portrait is based on two pieces written by Tommy Vassen on his life and his involvement in MK, respectively entitled “Tom’s times” and “Invited or incited”; it was compiled and edited by Taryn Mackay.
- 29 Information for this profile is based on an interview with Dr Essop Jassat on 29 November 2009; Shabir Ballim wrote it.
- 30 Information for this profile was provided by Khalik and Nafissa Mayet and some secondary sources; it was written by Rashid Seedat.
- 31 This profile was written by Mosie Moolla and edited by Shabir Ballim.
- 32 Information for this profile was provided by Hassen Lorgat; Rashid Seedat wrote it.
- 33 Information for this profile is based on an interview with Rookeya Vally on 29 November 2009; Shabir Ballim wrote it.
- 34 Information for this section is based on an interview with Maniben Sita on 27 November 2009; Rashid Seedat wrote it.
- 35 This section is extracted from Indres Naidoo’s article (1986) in Dawn: Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Souvenir issue: 25 anniversary of MK
- 36 This account is based on interviews with Mosie Moolla and Abdulhay Jassat; and Denis Herbstein’s article “The smiling policeman” in the Sunday Review supplement of The Independent on Sunday, 17 July 1994.
- 37 Maya Sooka did the translation of this song.
- 38 Translation taken from Anti-SAIC News, August 1981.

MOTHER OVERJOYED AT DETAINEE'S RELEASE

S. Time 21/6/70

By MARGARET SMITH

COOLSHED BLAST: 5 IN COURT

Four men tortured,
defence alleges

The Star 19 April 1969

ALLEGATIONS WERE MADE in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court today

An exit
permit to
isolation

Torture in
S. Africa:
testimony
by exile

The Times of India 11/7/70

GROUP AREAS ACT
AFFECTS
SPORTS

TICKY BARNES
LET YOUR SON
ALWIE SHOW
YOU THE WAY

ILY MAIL, Friday, April 2, 1962

Three get jail for aiding escapee Lee

Rand Daily Mail, 14 December, 1969

THE RED ACT TRIAL

★ FROM PAGE 8

'Practically forced'
to make statement,
woman tells judge

ishivande Nkomo, one of the
accused, accompanied her.

Winnie gave her a small

said nothing, but had not told
her to take it off.

She said her sister did not

THE ASSASSIN

MOTHER OVERJOYED AT DETAINEE'S RELEASE

S. Time 21/6/70

By MARGARET SMITH

COOLSHED BLAST: 5 IN COURT

Four men tortured,

The Star

"Men of Dynamite: Pen Portraits of MK Pioneers" traces the lives of early MK recruits

in the Johannesburg area. Some are well known, such as Ahmed Kathrada, Wilton Mkwayi and Mac Maharaj,

whilst others are relatively unknown such as Ameen Cajee, Kista Moonsamy

and Faker Salie. There are nineteen people featured in this remarkable but untold story.