

f(i'yep

JLNf,

N MQXbbox 3: Luv) Mommas) M.

Mac MAHARAJ

Member, National Executive Committee, ANC

Secretary, Negotiations Commission, ANC

The cranky old man staying in the garden flat attached to the home of an embassy official often nodded at the SADF personnel who popped in on friendly visits to the attache's son.

Not one of regime's soldiers could have guessed that the elderly stockbroker was the mastermind behind and commander of Operation Vula.

Sathyandranath "Mac" Maharaj was born in Newcastle in 1935. He matriculated at St Oswald's High School in Newcastle, and then studied towards a BA at the University of Natal.

He became active in the liberation struggle in 1953. At university he served on the SRC and campaigned against segregation on the campus. He was also editor of the student newspaper Student Call between 1955 and 1956. When the Treason Trial arrests began, he was appointed Natal editor of New Age, an independent weekly serving the national liberation movement.

In 1956 the University of Natal's non-European wing opened a law faculty, and Maharaj-completed the first year of his LLB. But the following year the university closed down for black students. In August 1957 Maharaj left for Britain.

In 1959 Maharaj enrolled at the London School of Economics, and began his degree from scratch. While in the UK he became founder member of the SA Freedom Association in 1958. He was also a founder member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. He served on the UK-based support committee of New Age, and the Movement for Colonial Freedom. He was active in the British Trade Union Movement and the National Union of Teachers, of which he was a member. He was also part of the UK-based collective of the SACP which co-ordinated and produced the The African Communist.

After the Sharpeville shootings Maharaj was asked to return to South Africa on a full-time basis in the underground. From the UK he went to the GDR where he underwent training for 11 months. After completing his training he returned to South Africa on May 2 1962 to serve in the political underground and MK.

In the follow-up to the Rivonia arrests of 1963, he and four others were arrested in July 1964 and charged with 177 acts of sabotage anyof continuation of the MK command structure. In the "Mini Rivonia rial", as it came to be known, Wilton Mkwayi was sentenced to life imprisonment, David Kitson to 20 years, Laloo Chiba to 18 years, John Matthews to 15 years and

Maharaj to 12 years' imprisonment. During the trial the state alleged that Maharaj was also a member of the central committee of the SACP. While he was in detention awaiting trial he was brutally tortured and several vertebrae in his neck were broken. He was reported to have been one of the most severely tortured detainees at the time.

Maharaj resumed his studies in prison, finishing a BA degree and two years of a BSc. He was released on December 8 1976 and immediately served with a banning order restricting him to his brother's flat in Durban. He was refused permission to take up employment.

On the instructions of the ANC leadership in prison he left South Africa in July 1977. He was deployed at the ANC headquarters in Lusaka. In December 1977 he was appointed secretary of the underground section of the ANC. In 1978 he became a member of the Revolutionary Council. He was elected on to the NEC at the Kabwe Conference in 1985 and became a member of the Politico-Military Council which replaced the Revolutionary Council by decision of the Kabwe Conference.

Maharaj returned to South Africa officially in June 1990, and emerged as a member of the SACP's political bureau and central committee. In July he was detained in connection with what became known as Operation Vula. It emerged after his arrest that he had spent most of the previous three years inside the country as the commander of Vula.

Maharaj and eight others were charged with terrorism under the Internal Security Act. In November 1991 they were granted indemnity and the case collapsed. He retired at the end of July 1990 from the central committee of the SACP and in December 1990 from the NEC of the ANC.

In 1991 he was nominated for the NEC at the ANC's 48th conference, accepted the nomination, and was re-elected to the NEC.

Maharaj is a member of the Negotiations Commission. He has also served on the Codesa Secretariat.

He and his wife Zarina have two children, Amica and Sekai Jo.

Ends (754 words)