

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICA  
PROVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS

P.O. Box 680,

MOROGORO.

United Republic of  
Our Ref. SEC/RP/7/73 Tanzania.

14th March, 1973\*  
Short Brief - Political Prisoners

"Your Excellency,

"With further reference to our letter to you dated 1st February, 1973 and released, by the special Committee on Apartheid at its 233rd. Meeting in response to our appeal for a campaign for the release of all South African political prisoners, we now wish to draw your attention to a summary trial that is to take place in the Pretoria. Supreme Court, starting on March 14, 1973-

"The accused, namely, Sandi Kitchener Gardener Sejaka alias Douglas Nene, Petrus Temba Mthembu, Ranka Theophilus Cholo and Justice Mpanza alias Reuben Ntlabathi shall have been held for a period of over 263 days in solitary confinement when they appear in Court to face charges under the obnoxious Terrorism Act, as you are no doubt aware, to keep a human being isolated from society for so long a period of time is not only excessive but severe in the extreme. But of concern is the naked violation of human rights perpetrated by the South African racist regime through its tyrannical practices which make 'criminals' of .and, in their wake, produce mental abnormalities in our people.

"In order to assist in broadening the base for that campaign therefore, we set out hereunder short biographical notes on each of the four people hereinabove referred to s-

a) "SANDI KITCRNER GARDENER SEJAKA (DOUGLAS NENI

"Born in the Transkei at a place called Ncambedlana in the outskirts of Umtata in May, 1942, Sandi grew up like any average African boy - herding cattle, helping at home and in the fields. He has a number of brothers and sisters. His parents lived partly by eking out a miserable income from the land and partly by migrating to industrial -White-south Africa' for cash wages.

!VHe attended school at St. John's College where he obtained his Secondary education about 1957-1958\*

He was'\* and still is a keen student and a hard worker. But like all African children coming from the poor

sections of the South African society, he was compelled to abandon his studies despite his thirst for knowledge. However, leaving school did not mean an end to his academic progress. His educational attainments are indeed high in a number of fields which he achieved through self-study. An avid reader,

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he studied all the fields he regarded beneficial to himself and to the oppressed people of South Africa.

He excelled not only in theoretical subjects but also in technical ones. One of his close associates once described him as "energetic, fearless and technical-minded"

"The general hardships, poverty and disabilities suffered by the African masses, drew him into the fold of struggle. Thus he joined the ranks of the African National Congress whilst still a student at St. John's College. Very fond of political discussions, he also turned out to be a good organiser for the Youth League, fiver since, he has consciously and consistently broadened his political understanding and grasp of the oouth African situation and international affairs.

"He joined the Umkhonto We sizwe (military wing of .the ANC) in 1964 and left the country soon thereafter for training abroad. His main hobbies were judo, body-building and reading which explains his well-built and slim figure through the years. Most of his spare time was spent on reading, making notes, typing and filing them for reference. He never had an idle moment. Among the militants, he was one of those on whom our greatest hopes were pinned. We are confident that his dauntless courage will not be broken by the arrest, torture and gaol conditions.

#### b) "PETRUS TMBA MDKEMBU

"Petrus is one of the ANC militants who, when returning home to cftntinue the liberation struggle under the harsh conditions of illegality, fell into the clutches of the police network. Although he grew up in Natal, he was born in Klip town near Johannesburg into a family of workers. In the family of two sisters and a brother, he is the eldest of the children.

"For the greater part of his life, his father was a worker but later took to shoe-repairing in an attempt to make ends meet. His father's meagre income was supplemented by the earnings of his mother who worked as a;was.her-womanis.

" Coming from a poor family, he could only study at school as far as Standard II and had to look for employment at a tender age. He worked in a number of firms and factories. Nevertheless, he managed to improve his education through self-study. His hobby was football.

"He joined the African National Congress in 1958. Though a fine football-player, he devoted most of his time to the Movement. He was at one time an Assistant Branch Secretary of the ANC Youth League. . In the sphere of political activity, he distinguished himself as an organiser - relentlessly moving from house to house preaching revolution. He himself participated in local and national campaigns launched by the ANC.

He also took an active part in the selling and distribution of

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the INC publications and various propaganda materials.

'The South African Special Branch Police kept him under constant surveillance and his home frequently raided. He left the country in 1963 under the auspices of the ANC to undergo military training. This decision was taken on the recommendation of his Branch because he was "already sold out" and it was not safe for him to remain in the country any longer. When he left, he was about to get married.

»Peter, as he was at times called by his friends, is a short man of dark complexion and energetic. His deep loyalty to the ANC and the people of South Africa earned him the admiration of all who knew him. It is his sense of duty and commitment to the cause of the revolution that moved him to return to South Africa despite the risks of arrest and heavy penalties.

c j » RANKA THEOPHILUS CHOLQ

» Comrade Ranka was born in Pietersburg at Chief Matlala's village. His father was a blacksmith. He attended school but went only as far as Standard IV.

On leaving school, he went to Johannesburg where he found employment as a domestic servant and thereafter as a worker in a shop. The general conditions of the Black workers in South Africa made him realise the importance of the trade union movement which he joined and rose in its ranks to become a shop-steward. Not long, he was elevated to the Executive of the Shop and Office Workers Union. During his lunch hour breaks, he worked for the strengthening of his union by organising more workers.

"He was a member of the ANC and at one time was Chairman of a local Branch in which he was active. He left South Africa in 1962 to study at a Trade Union school leaving behind a wife and a child.

In 1967, he made an attempt to return to South Africa to carry out underground work. He did not reach home as he was intercepted and detained by the Botswana police. In the course of interrogation by the police in Botswana, he stood firm even though the police were threatening to hand him over to the South African police if he failed to answer the questions to their liking. Subsequently, the Botswana authorities sentenced him to a prison term of three years and three months plus a fine of R800 or 6 months imprisonment. Though he had money on his person, he refused to pay the fine preferring to serve the entire sentence of imprisonment. He maintained his morale high in gaol and inspired the rest of his prison-mates.

Â»Â«We are convinced that no amount or form of brutality will break this fine militant and the very fact that .he is at present undergoing torture at the .hands of the South African gestapo, is a convincing demonstration of the unflinching courage and dedication of Comrade Ranka.

d) JUSTICE MPANZA (REUBEN NTLABATHI)

"Justice, popularly known among his colleagues, as!Gizenga!

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was born in Groutville, Natal in 1934 of a devout Christian family. His father owned a small sugar plantation where Justice used to work after school, helping, his parents.

SiOn completing Standard VI, Justice went to work at a sugar refinery in Durban. Dissatisfied with the poor pay and working conditions and, convinced of the need for the improvement of the lot of the African worker in south Africa,

Justice found the answer in joining the South African Congress of trade Unions.

"He joined the African National Congress in 1956. Because of his outstanding organising ability and sheer hard work, he rose to become Chairman of a local -branch of the ANC Youth League. In time, he also became the ANC local organiser.

Since then, he participated in all the activities and campaigns of the ANC and as a result, was arrested on a number of occasions for taking part in political demonstrations.

"Justice joined Umkhonto We oizwe (the military wing of the ANC) in 1962. He left outh Africa in the same year to undergo military training abroad. He left a young wife and children behind.

"In 1966, he was arrested (later released) together with some of his colleagues in Botswana when attempting to return to . outh Africa.

"In 196?, he participated m the Vi/ankie Campaigns when the,ANC-ZAPU combatants fought and inflicted heavy casualties on the xthodesian and South African troops in Zimbabwe. Justice acquitted himself in bravery in those battles and displayed complete disregard for his personal safety. The operations were strenuous and there were days when there was no food and Justice never showed any signs of wavering.

"Gizenga\* is a man regarded by comrades and colleagues alike as having the courage of his convictions and, as a person with an indomitable faith in the ultimate victory of the just cause of the oppressed people of South Africa.

"His disposition is marked by a strong sense of good-fellowship and amiableness. He threw himself into a variety of activities including traditional dancing, volleyball, singing, the recitation of Zulu poetry and praises of African heroes.

"Your Excellency, we do not wish to burden you any further save,, to urge you once more for the immediate initiation of a world-wide campaign for the release of all South African priso-

ners.

"We shall await to hear from you in due course.

t: Yours respectfully,

(Sgd) ALPxiiiD NZQ~

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