

Rivonia — the other five men in jail

THE STAR WED. NOV. 9 1988

Speculation about Nelson Mandela's imminent release has led to hopes that the other five remaining men who were sentenced with him in the Rivonia sabotage trial will be released.

"If they release Mandela, they must release the others. They sat on the same bench as Mandela and they have suffered for 25 years in the same way as Mandela," says June, wife of Andrew Mlangeni, one of the Rivonia trialists.

Lawyer Priscilla Jana makes regular visits to Mlangeni, Sisulu and Matsoaledi. She says all the trialists have access to their immediate family, have tremendous spirit and are optimistic and hopeful.

"Everyone seems to be speculating about Mandela's release, but nobody is certain as to what is going to happen," she said.

Offers to "conditionally" release the men over the years have been rejected.

Friends and colleagues remember the men well, but most of them have been largely ignored by the media in the international campaign to release Mandela.

Walter Sisulu (76), an attorney, was elected secretary-general of the ANC Youth League in 1949, and was one of the key leaders of the 1952 defiance campaign, which led to the treason trial of 1956-1961, where all 156 accused were acquitted.

Emergency

Although Sisulu was not a Communist Party member, he was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, and detained in 1960 under the first State of Emergency. He fled from Orlando, Soweto, in April 1963, after being placed under house arrest, pending an appeal of a six-year sentence after being found guilty of inciting people to stay at home in protest against the declaration of the Republic of South Africa.

He reappeared at Rivonia when he was arrested.

His wife, Albertina, who is one of the national presidents of the United Democratic Front, has spent only five of her 44 years of marriage with Walter and her family. She has spent most of her life under banning orders and is presently restricted under the third state of emergency.

Nelson Mandela and five other members of the ANC and the military organisation, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), have been behind prison bars for 24 years.

Eight men were found guilty of sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Rivonia trial. Six of the accused were arrested at the Lilliesleaf farm, near Rivonia, on July 11 1963.

The Star, reporting on the trial of "Mandela and others" in June 1964, said the men received their verdicts impassively and smiled and waved to friends in the gallery as they went down the steps to their cells, each accompanied by his own police guard.

Lionel Bernstein was the only one of the nine accused who was found not guilty and released. He was immediately re-arrested and banned, but skipped the country.

Mr Justice de Wet based his verdict largely on the document "Operation Mayibuye", which was seized during the Rivonia raid. He said plans had been made for guerilla war.

Denis Goldberg was conditionally released from prison in 1985 and Govan Mbeki (78) was released unconditionally from Robben Island in December last year, but was restricted to the Port Elizabeth Magisterial district a month later.

The remaining prisoners are Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Andrew Mlangeni, Raymond Mhlaba and Ahmed Kathrada, who were transferred from Robben Island to Pollsmoor prison in 1982, and Elias Matsoaledi, the only remaining Rivonia prisoner on the island. In this article, **JANET HEARD** focuses on the five men who, like Mandela, are still in prison, but who have not received the same amount of publicity.

They have four children. Zwelakhe, editor of the *New Nation*, has been in detention since 1985.

Sisulu has been described by political prisoners released in recent years as a warm person, deeply interested in new developments and a stranger to the generation gap.

Apart from a number of minor operations in 1982, Sisulu has remained healthy throughout his prison term.

Ahmed Mohammed Kathrada, (59), was born in Schweizer-Reneke, western Transvaal. He became politically involved at the age of 11 and became known in the community as "Kathy". He was a member of the Communist Party in the 1940s, and was elected general-secretary of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC), being one of the key Indians who forged closer links with the ANC and TIC.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, he was tried, jailed and detained on several occasions, and was one of the treason trialists. In 1963, he went underground and joined the MK high command after he had been placed under house arrest. He was 34 at the time of his arrest. He was found guilty of only one of the four counts in the trial.

His family are granted 35 visits a year. A close family

member, who visited him in Pollsmoor a few weeks ago, said: "Kathy is extremely well. Recently there were plans to write his biography, but Kathy said it should not be encouraged because he is part of the total struggle, and he did not wish to be isolated as an individual."

While in prison, Kathrada has completed a BA degree and two honours degrees. He is presently seeking permission to study for an MA in African History.

Banned

Elias Matsoaledi (64), a former ANC, South African Congress of Trade Union (SACTU) and South African Communist Party (SACP) member, first became active as a factory worker in Johannesburg in the early 1940s where he joined the Leather Workers Union and later served as an executive member of the Committee of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU). Shortly after the 1952 defiance campaign, he was banned, and in 1960 he was detained for four months.

He went underground, and served on the MK's Johannesburg regional command, where he assisted in hiding recruits and sending them abroad for military training and procuring armaments. His wife, Caroline (61), who lives in Orlando West,



Mrs Albertina Sisulu, wife of Walter Sisulu, gathers with family and friends outside the Pretoria Supreme Court in June 1964 to support the Rivonia trialists in the dock. Eight of the accused were convicted of sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment. Six of them, including Nelson Mandela, are still in prison.

and who was detained for 167 days during the Rivonia trial, says the family have been harassed by the police on numerous occasions.

They have seven children, three of whom are in exile. The youngest, Koikoi (25), who was born a month after his father's arrest, saw his father for the first time when he was 18 years old. He said he had formed a close relationship with his father through letters. "I was only told where my father was when I was 10 years old, and as I grew up I learnt more about my father and the struggle," he said.

Members of the family get 12 visits a year, paid for by the Red Cross. Last year the fami-

ly were denied a visit over the Christmas period. Matsoaledi has asthma, but is otherwise well, according to Caroline.

Andrew Mlangeni (60) left school in the late 1940s and worked as a golf caddie and a bus driver to earn money to further his education. He worked as a journalist for the now banned *New Age* newspaper.

He became politically active during the 1952 Defiance campaign and later joined the ANC, becoming Johannesburg branch secretary of the Youth League. He was one of the founder members of the MK, serving on the Johannesburg regional command.

His wife, June, who was de-

tained for 90 days during the trial, remembers the days when her husband moved freely around Dube township, Soweto, using the identity of the "Rev Andrew Moketi" of the African Apostolic Faith Mission.

During the early 1960s, he was involved in hiding recruits and sending them abroad as well as in procuring armaments.

Matsoaledi started writing his fifth year LLB examination on October 19, just after a visit from June. She says rumours about her husband's release have been circulating for years, and she will believe them only when he is freed. They have four children, two of

whom who are in exile.

Raymond Mhlaba (64), comes from a Port Elizabeth working class family and was employed as a laundry worker until 1947, when he was fired. He was a member of CNETU and from the mid-1940s he was active in both the CPUSA and the ANC.

In 1949 he led the Eastern Cape bus boycott Action Committee and in 1952 he was chosen as the PE Defiance Campaign volunteer in chief. During the 1950s/1960s he was detained several times.

Mhlaba was transferred to Pollsmoor in 1982 and was granted permission to marry the mother of his three children, Dedika Heliso, in March 1986.