

Family must give up Fischer ashes

Staff Reporter

ABRAM "BRAM" FISCHER, former leader of the South African Communist Party, died yesterday. His family have been ordered to hand over his ashes to the Department of Prisons.

Fischer, 67, died from cancer of the brain, hip and spine at the Bloemfontein home of his brother, Dr Paul Fischer at 7.30 am yesterday.

The family immediately notified the Prisons Department of his death.

According to the family, a colonel of the department then visited the Fischer home and read a letter from the Minister of Prisons, Mr Jimmy Kruger, setting out three conditions for the funeral.

They were:

- That the funeral take place in Bloemfontein;
- That the funeral be within one week of Fischer's death;
- That his ashes be handed over to the Prisons Department.

Fischer's son-in-law, Dr Tim Wilson, said yesterday it had been the family's wish that he be buried in Johannesburg.

REFUSED

Beyond that, he said, he preferred not to comment on the Minister's rulings.

Speaking from Cape Town last night, Mr Kruger confirmed the three conditions for the funeral but refused to discuss the reasons for them.

Asked if it was standard procedure for ashes to be returned to the Department of Prisons, Mr Kruger said: "Presumably yes — until the department decides what to do with them."

He referred further inquiries to the Department of Prisons.

The Commissioner of Prisons, General J. C. Steyn, asked to comment on this point, said last night his department had not yet decided what to do with the ashes.

Earlier, Mr Kruger said Fischer's death came as no surprise.



Bram Fischer . . . this picture was taken before his arrest in 1964.

Order on picture

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PERMISSION from the Department of Prisons was necessary before the Rand Daily Mail could publish Bram Fischer's picture.

And the Department of Prisons ordered that the picture had to be one taken while he was a free man, "before his initial arrest".

The Department of Prisons also ruled that newspapers could publish one picture of Fischer on one occasion only within one week of the former Communist Party leader's death.

In terms of the Prisons Act, no picture of a prisoner, alive or dead, may be published without permission.

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"I received medical reports on him every two days and the man was obviously very ill.

"I received the last report on Tuesday and it was clear his death was imminent," the Minister said.

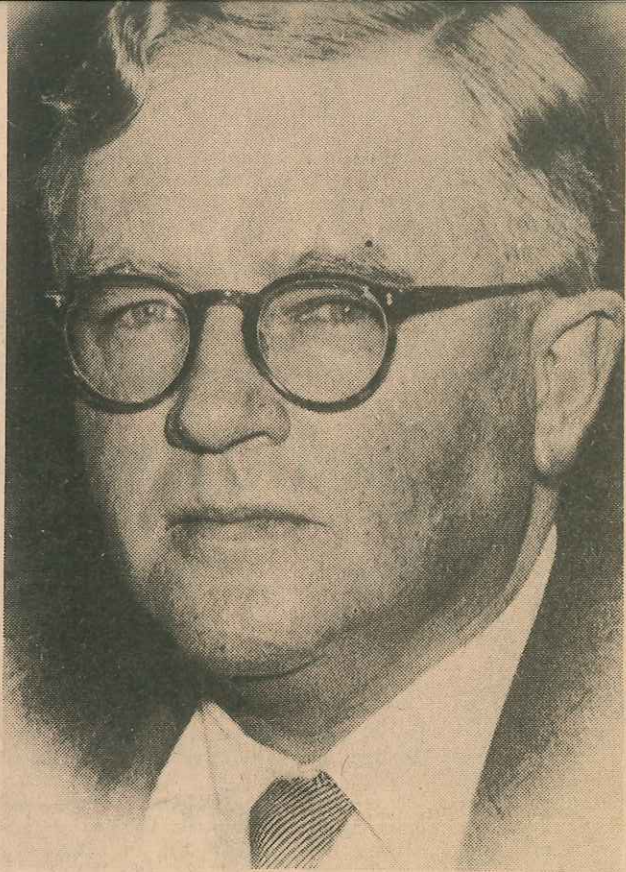
It is understood Dr Fischer, at whose home Fischer had been nursed for the last two months of his life, and Fischer's daughters, Mrs Ilse Wilson and Mrs Ruth Eastwood, were with him when he died.

His condition had deteriorated in the past two days.

In London last night Mrs Helen Suzman, Progressive Party MP for Houghton, said it was monstrous to pursue Bram Fischer beyond the grave by demanding the return of his ashes to the Department of Prisons.

"One can think of no reason except sheer vindictiveness," she said.

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"One can think of no reason except sheer vindictiveness," she said.

His death had come as a welcome release and she was pleased he had spent the last few weeks of his life with his family.

● The funeral will be at the Bloemfontein Crematorium at 4.30 pm on Monday.

● See Pages 5, 15

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