

FREE STATE

Although it appears all Security Branch files in the Bloemfontein head office were destroyed – except an 88-page register of Section 29 detainees held under security laws between 1982 and 1993 – records do survive in outlying stations. These range from a sole detainee on record at Sasolburg, to comprehensive records held at Thaba Nchu and Welkom.

The surviving indexes to these files show a fixation with the activities and plans of Apla, which had not yet suspended its armed struggle, and to a lesser extent MK and the ANC self-defence units – including allegations of the secret police and the army supplying arms to these formations. There is even a file on the botched October 1993 SADF raid against Apla in Mthatha, ordered by then president FW de Klerk, in which five teenagers were accidentally killed.

The files show an extensive intelligence network detailing which activists had returned from exile, who went abroad for training in places like Dar es Salaam and Cairo, and the location of arms caches in Botswana and ANC arms-smuggling routes into Transkei and Swaziland from Zimbabwe, and from Botswana into Bophuthatswana.

GAUTENG

There is no Gauteng file, and the reasons for this are unclear.

NORTH WEST

These files contained several photograph albums of AWB and PAC activists and their meetings, and cover a wide range of topics.

These include taxi wars, boycotts, deportations, missing persons, unlawful organisations, prisoners, security force tasks, right-wing churches, and “far-right West Transvaal businesses”.

Files with potentially explosive content include one named “S30/2/2 (4) Third Force” – accepted today to be divisive police dirty tricks masquerading as “black-on-black” violence – and another file in which “help given to police” is detailed.

The files also included personal profiles on 11 right-wing figures.

LIMPOPO

These files included numerous personal files on the activities of people such as (then) Bishop Desmond Tutu (13 reports in file number S54); Mathatha Tsedu, now editor of *City Press* (30 reports in file number SBV 4N/19); files on detainees like Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, now Azapo deputy president (31 reports in file number SBV 4N/18), as well as two doctors of apparently Dutch origin.

Organisations under surveillance included everything from the United Democratic Front and unions like police union Popcru, to the forgotten Far Northern Transvaal Teachers' Congress and the Bantustan-based Venda National Party.

MPUMALANGA

This index, listed on a single page, included six files on the right wing, as well as files on public unrest, the fabrication of weapons, the AWB, the Boerekommando, and on “SAP involved in right-wing organisations”.

KWAZULU NATAL

The response from Durban gives a hint of the hostility with which Crime Intelligence viewed Fivaz's request on behalf of the TRC. Durban asserted that the post-1990 files could not be construed as illicit monitoring of lawful, unbanned organisations, but only of “activities which could lead to the destabilisation of the country”.

“It is also of this office's opinion that the mentioned files are not related to the mandate of the [Truth] Commission.” Despite such reluctance, a long list of file numbers were given, covering topics as diverse as the National Peace Accord, taxi violence, Transkei intelligence, illegal military training abroad, trade unions, unlawful organisations, underground structures, and university organisations.

Files on detainees covered the period 1983-1990. Various court records were included: State vs PAC president Zeph Mothopeng; State vs SACP Midlands firebrand Harry Gwala; State vs Dumisa Ntsebeza, later TRC chief investigator; State vs Fatima Meer and Baptiste Marie; and oddly, a Cape Town charge sheet against the liberal MP Collin Eglin.

WESTERN CAPE

This is the most extensive surviving collection, comprising at least 78 pages listing files on diverse individual personalities who include liberal politician and co-founder of the Progressive Party, Helen Suzman; Bishops Peter Storey and Trevor Huddleston; writer Breyten Breytenbach; academics Martin Legassick, Peter Dreyer and verligte Afrikaner Sampie Terreblanche; journalists Benjamin Pogrand, Robert Kirby – who wrote stinging satires of the National Party government and apartheid – and current Independent Newspapers Foreign Service head Peter Fabricius.

Files with only initials and surnames are presumed to cover activists Barney Pitjana, Raymond Mhlaba, Ronnie Kasrils, Oupa Lehulere, Albie Sachs, Alex Boraine, Max Sisulu, Elias Motsaedi and Swapo Robben Island detainee Herman Toivo ja Toivo.

A file on artist Vladimir Tretchkoff is probably explained by paranoia at his Russian origins, while another file details Russian businesses in Botswana.

There is also a bewildering array of organisations which were spied on. These include religions organisations that range from the NG Kerk to the Scientologists, the Muslim Judicial Council to the extremist Qibla, and the SA Jewish Board of Deputies.

Media organisations targeted include the SA Society of Journalists and the SA Press Association; trade unions (18 files on Cosatu and others on its individual affiliated unions); as well as academia, NGOs, charities, civics, political organisations, primary schools, old boys' clubs and residents' associations.

NORTHERN CAPE

This province returned very few files, representing the most slender collection and comprising a list of files on 11 detainees, none of them well known; as well as files on diamond and gold theft, and associated fraud.

EASTERN CAPE

These files included a list of resistance-related criminal cases, plus files on topics as diverse as taxi wars; task forces; MK strike units; the AWB, its members and its weapons-smuggling networks; Boerekommandos; the Afrikaner Volksfront; Apla and its intelligence unit; Apla's 1993 Cape Town St James Church massacre; SADF cross-border operations (presumably into Transkei and Ciskei); business boycotts; demonstrations; attacks on security forces; and weapons-smuggling from Zambia to Port Elizabeth.

Potentially explosive in content are the two files on the 1993 Highgate Hotel massacre, which was originally blamed on Apla, but denied by Apla commander Letlapa Mphahlele.

It has since been alleged to have been a defence force “black op”.

Also intriguing is a file on “AWB infiltration”.

There are also five registers of more than 1 200 Section 29 detainees covering the period 1982-1993. – Michael Schmidt

Life in Chikurubi prison is a fate worse than death

The condemned section at Chikurubi is one of the most depressing places on Earth. With only 11 solitary-confinement cells, each measuring 1,2m wide by about 4m long, it was never meant for the average criminal.

Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison was built by the Rhodesian government, with the condemned section designed especially as a holding centre for politically motivated prisoners.

The inner and outer walls of the prison, the floors, and the doorways are all reinforced concrete grey. This must be one of the most dismal colours – grey. Try spending five years in solitary confinement in that grey world.

In each cell there is a concrete slab, supposedly your bed, raised about half a metre off the floor. A hole in the concrete serves as your toilet. A light burns in each cell all day, every day. Drinking water is kept in a plastic bucket in each cell. There are no taps. There are no windows. There is one cold-water pipe, protruding from the wall in a shower “area”.

The day I was locked up in the condemned section, I was shaved bald and had to strip naked. I remained in that cell, naked, for nearly three years of my five years on death row, with only a couple of coarse grey blankets and a hard felt mat.

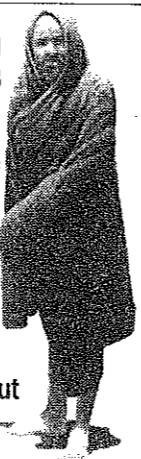
From most of the cells you cannot see outside, to the sunlit concrete exercise yard, so you remain in your brightly lit cell without knowing whether it is day or night, morning or afternoon, what day or month or even what year it is.

It is possible to converse in the condemned section with one's fellow prisoners, but you can do so only in a raised voice. Each day we were allowed out of our cells, to have a cold shower or

Kevin Woods was sentenced to death in Zimbabwe in 1988 for his role in the bombing of an ANC safe house in Bulawayo – done on behalf of South African Military Intelligence.

His sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment, before he was freed almost 20 years later.

In this extract, he talks about life on death row.



to sweep our cells – one at a time, twice a day for 30 minutes. We were allowed a Bible but no other reading material. There were no radios, no televisions and no newspapers – nothing.

Before I was sentenced to death I had been allowed to receive and write letters, as many as I wanted, and my wife was allowed twice-weekly visits for 30 minutes. This changed once I was sentenced. Visits were reduced to 15 minutes, once a month, and only during working hours. And I was only permitted to receive one letter a month, to which I could respond with a single page.

Once a month the guards would arrive at my cell door with a handful of letters and I had to peer into the pile and choose just one. The rest were thrown away.

After a few years of this interference with my

correspondence, I managed to retain a human rights lawyer who obtained a court order allowing me to communicate by mail, without hindrance. In 1994, the court found in my favour that it was a basic and fundamental human right for me to correspond. This court challenge opened the way for all sentenced prisoners in Zimbabwe to be allowed the right to correspond.

The wheels of justice turn very slowly in Zimbabwe. I had to go through five years of solitary confinement on death row before I managed to obtain that court order to communicate with my loved ones.

During my exercise time I would stand and gaze down the corridor leading to the exercise yard with such a profound longing to feel the sun's warmth on my naked body that sometimes I'd think my heart would just squeeze itself shut with heartache. It got so bad that I would eventually avoid looking at the gate that led to the exercise yard and warmth.

It was interesting at that time to hear of a medical specialist from Bethesda University Hospital in the United States say my living conditions violated the laws governing laboratory-research animals in the US and the Commonwealth.

Three years later I was to obtain yet another court decision in my favour. This deprivation of sunshine resulted in the Supreme Court ordering the prisons to allow all prisoners on death row to have an hour in the sun twice a day. What a thing that was, after nearly three years without any sunlight, to suddenly feel the sun's warmth again, albeit somewhat diluted through the steel mesh covering the yard. Just to stand and tilt my head back and feel the sun on my

face was such a wonderful delight.

The routine on death row is enough to drive anyone mad with boredom. Each day at about 8am you get a cup of runny maize meal for breakfast. At 10.30am lunch is stiff maize meal porridge (sadza) and a little bit of overcooked leafy vegetable in its water, or if they're feeling flush, a plain boiled potato. Supper is at 1.30pm and is either a repeat of lunch or a quarter cup of boiled beans instead of the leaves.

Once a week you receive a piece of boiled meat, about the size of your thumb, instead of the beans. No coffee, usually no tea, no sugar, etc.

You fantasise about food a lot in prison, more so on death row, where it is impossible to smuggle the odd titbit from outside. It is almost physical, your longing for the most basic of dishes like a fried-egg-and-bacon breakfast, or a piece of fresh bread – just basic stuff like that, never mind things like roast beef, or wors on a braai.

Three times a year your family can deliver some food to the prison, which has to be consumed that same day. As a prisoner who is not on death row, you can usually keep your goodie parcel for maybe a week or two before the guards come and destroy what meagre bits and pieces of biltong, sweets and so on you have saved, and then it's back to the swill from the kitchen.

● This is an extract from *The Kevin Woods Story*, published at a recommended retail price of R265 by 30 Degree South Publishers. It will be launched in Joburg on Wednesday, Cape Town on November 15 and Durban on November 22. For more information, contact Jane Lewis at 011-673-2218 or jane@30degreessouth.co.za

