

Sobu complains

RELIEF FOR HELD MEN'S FAMILIES, REPORTS LOUW

PRETORIA REPORTER

SEVENTY cases of the families of 90-day detainees having approached the authorities for assistance because of the absence of their breadwinners had come to light, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Louw, said in a statement last night.

In all despatch cases assistance had been given to such families in terms of an instruction that dependants of political detainees should not be left without care.

The notes provided the dependants of detainees with certificates stating that the breadwinner was under detention. These certificates would be presented to the Bureau of Commissioners, or another suitable authority, who would provide appropriate relief.

The Minister drew attention to a letter dated November 24, 1963, from the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa in Matters to the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid. It claimed that the life of Robert Sobukwe in his place of detention on Robben Island was in jeopardy.

It stated the conditions under which he was detained were "inhumane" and "maliciously designed to remove his physical and mental endurance for work."

Examined

It went on that an announcement of Sobukwe's death could be expected any day, on the pattern of what was alleged to have happened in Patrice Lumumba, and that an appeal be sent to Pretoria to allow an independent medical practitioner to examine him.

Mr. Louw's statement said Dr. Georg Hoffmann, delegate of the International Red Cross, had been offered facilities by Mr. Vorster, the Minister of Justice, to visit Sobukwe or any other detainees in night cells to name.

The offer remained open, but Dr. Hoffmann had only expressed an interest in visiting Sobukwe, which he did on September 27, said Mr. Louw.

Moderate

Attached to the statement were minutes of a covering letter to the Minister of Justice from the International Red Cross, and of Dr. Hoffmann's report, headed "strictly confidential."

Dr. Hoffmann said the climate of Robben Island was moderate and healthy, and that Sobukwe was confined in a wire enclosure separate from the main prison buildings.

He lived in a three-roomed bungalow with an adequately furnished study and two living-rooms. He was the only occupant and his accommodation could be compared with that of a high-ranking officer in a prisoner-of-war camp. The food was sufficient in quantity, quality and variety and Dr. Hoffmann had eaten the detainee's ration himself.

Sobukwe was decently clothed in a white shirt, long trousers and shoes. The bungalow had a shower bath and a lavatory.

Normally there was a resident medical officer on the island, but at the time of the visit the District Medical Officer was in charge and visited the island daily by boat.

For recreation Sobukwe had a vegetable garden and sufficient books. In private conversation, Sobukwe told Dr. Hoffmann he had no complaints about his confinement, and he seemed at ease with the commandant and other members of the prison staff.

Request

He was allowed to write to his family twice a week, but had asked that his correspondence with his wife in Johannesburg be speeded up. He had expressed only one other wish, that his wife be allowed to spend her annual vacation of three weeks with him.

Mr. Louw said the report circulated at the United Nations was typical of the maliciously false accusations levelled against the South African Government and of the enmity displayed by African states.

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