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Mail Extra

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Funeral delay for brother Ernest

CAPE TOWN: — The funeral of Mr Robert Sobukwe, the famed former leader of the outlawed Pan Africanist Congress, who died in Kimberley, on Sunday night, has been postponed to March 11, to enable his brother, the Right Rev Ernest Sobukwe, Anglican Bishop of Umtata, to attend.

The funeral was to have been held on Saturday. But Bishop Sobukwe is ill and unable to attend. Mr Sobukwe will be buried in his birth place Graaf Reinet in the Karoo.

It is believed that the date of the funeral had also been postponed to make it possible for those travelling from far to attend. Yesterday Mrs Veronica

Sobukwe said she expected her three children anytime from the United States where they are studying.

They are: A daughter Mliswa, 23, who is doing her third-year as a pre-dentistry student at Michigan State University, and two sons: Dluslezwe, 21, a third-year engineering student at Morehouse College in Atlanta, and Dalisofo, 19, who left for the US to study in January this year.

Mr Andrew Young, the US Ambassador to the United Nations, is the legal guardian of the three children in the United States. They live with Mr Young's family in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mrs Sobukwe declined to comment yesterday when

asked whether Mr Young would attend the funeral.

Reacting to the death of Mr Sobukwe this week, Chief George Matanzima, the Transkei Minister of Justice, declined to comment and explained that Mr Sobukwe "was not his political friend".

Mr J T Kruger, the South African Minister of Justice, Prisons and Police, this week also declined to comment on Mr Sobukwe's death when approached. He would not say whether Mr Sobukwe would be unshamed.

The Kimberley security police chief, Colonel T G Du Plessis, yesterday spoke of his task of keeping Mr Robert Sobukwe under surveillance for more than eight years.

Speaking to Patrick Laurence in his office on the seventh floor of Kimberley's police headquarters, Colonel Du Plessis remembered the dead black leader as a man who treated him courteously.

"I did visit him at his home on occasion," Colonel Du Plessis told the Rand Daily Mail.

"I was received like a gentleman and treated like a gentleman. His wife can confirm that."

Col Du Plessis, a stockily-built man with an enigmatic smile, had to keep track of Mr Sobukwe for 24 hours a day from his restriction in Kimberley in mid-1960 to his death on Monday.

It is not ensuring that Mr Sobukwe — who was

regarded as politically dangerous enough to detain for six years on Robben Island — obeyed the terms of his banning order which restricted him to Kimberley and house arrested him at night.

With two tape recorders close at hand — one on his desk and a second at his telephone nearby — and an aide at his side, Colonel Du Plessis likened his surveillance role to a "business transaction".

It was a duty to be fulfilled without allowing personal feelings to intrude, he said.

Asked how he felt about Mr Sobukwe's death, Colonel Du Plessis paused a moment and said: "I heard about it in the newspapers."

But he then added that Mr Sobukwe had received him "like a gentleman" when he visited the restricted black leader.

Sources close to Mr Sobukwe confirmed yesterday that he was courteous to the Colonel and viewed him as a man who had a duty to do and who "behaved decently" in executing it.

But Mr Sobukwe's attitude did not go further than that. He retained a "cold and clear" realisation that he and Colonel Du Plessis were on opposite sides politically, with the Colonel, the representative of a system which he, Mr Sobukwe, believed to be oppressive.



A stretched five salote given by a crowd at the Regina Muthi Catholic memorial service for Mr Robert Sobukwe in Soweto last night. Speakers included Mr Mthabane, chairman of the Soweto Action Committee.

Picture: DONNIE KNEEL