

# Breyten witness near tears

Staff Reporter

CLOSE to tears yesterday, the detained wife of an atomic scientist, Mrs Durten Rohm, told the Breyten Breytenbach trial in Pretoria there was a stage at which she felt the most suitable punishment for her was to be shot.

Mr Breytenbach pleaded guilty to the majority of the Terrorism Act charges against him at the Palace of Justice.

In a courtroom packed with journalists and security police, Dr Piet Henning appearing for Mr Breytenbach, told the court that Mr Breytenbach would plead guilty to the charges, but asked prosecuting counsel to accept a number of amendments.

The amendments were accepted by Dr Percy Yutar, Attorney-General of the Transvaal.

Mrs Rohm said she felt she had "done a very terrible thing" by working for an underground subversive organisation.

She told the Judge President of the Transvaal, Mr Justice Cillie: "There was a stage when I felt the only suitable punishment for me was that I should be shot."

"But I still want to live. I have many friends. I don't want to be shot," she said.

Mrs Rohm earlier told the court of her activities as "the Pretoria connection" of the secret organisation, Akhela.

During her connection with the organisation, she was asked to send certain clippings of newspaper reports to members of the group, but she did not do so.

Under cross examination by Dr Henning, she said it would be correct to describe her as "the Pretoria connection" of the group.

Her child was her main concern in life, but working for Akhela gave her certain excitement in an otherwise dull existence.

Asked if her "leftist" ideas originated in Germany, Mrs Rohm said that she would not actually describe herself as leftist.

The sister of Mr Jobst Grapow, allegedly a co-conspirator with Mr Breytenbach, said she was in fact a mercenary — although certain aspects of apartheid upset her.

The most Left she had ever been, she said, was to read in Germany, the magazine called Der Spiegel.

She knew Mr Breytenbach, was an artist, and completely unreliable. She had never considered him to be a political being. But he did share her views on petty apartheid.

At one stage, she complained to another member of Akhela that Mr Breytenbach was completely unreliable and not suitable ever to be a political leader.

Mr Norman Lewis, a former Witwatersrand University student, said he became an active worker for the Industrial Aid Society in 1974. The aims of this group were to help Black workers with problems arising from their work.

The group aimed also at getting the Blacks to band together to form trade unions.

The funds of the organisation included 50 per cent donations from the workers themselves and the National Union of South African Students.

He already at that stage, he said, had qualms about the security of the organisation, but felt committed to it.

Early this year, he went to Europe, where he was told to ask at a certain address for Dick — code name of Mr Breytenbach.

When he made a telephone call in Amsterdam to establish contact, the voice at the other end of the line said he should lie low for a time.

He went to Paris, then to London, where he met Dick and Jack — code name of Mr Donald Moerdijk.

At that stage, he still had misgivings about the organisation, he said.

He learnt that Dick was based in Paris, and went to parts where he underwent training in the hands of members of a movement known as Solidarity.

This training was in the concealment of documents, the copying of stamps, including exercises in surveillance and countersurveillance, eavesdropping and the making of Molotov cocktails.

Among the documentation he was handed a book



Curious onlookers outside Pretoria's Palace of Justice yesterday where the trial of Breyten Breytenbach began.

called CIA Diary. It dealt with security measures.

The organisation for which he was then working was on three levels. The first was activity in open bodies such as trade unions, the second level worked in cells with the aim of direct action, and the third was intelligence.

People and bodies concerned had code names. For instance, the African National Congress was Mamma.

"I discovered that the organisation was small, but we were not the first recruits. Others were operating inside South Africa already.

"We regarded students and student organisations such as Nusas as a good recruiting ground. Trade unions and progressive church groups — progressive in the sense that they favoured change — were also good recruiting grounds," said Mr Lewis.

A group called Satu was to operate in Amsterdam to raise money for the projects. This was to have been staffed by one White and one Black worker.

Also discussed was the possibility of setting up an underground Press, to print "informative publications, anti-apartheid, but not of an inflammatory nature".

But, said Mr Lewis, he became very disillusioned as time went on. He felt that many things he would like to see happen were being shelved, treated in an offhand manner, and that things were pushed aside, discussed and not brought to finality.

He knew the group was concerned about the detente moves of the Prime Minister, Mr Vorster.

The ANC particularly was concerned, because the success of the premier's move was "squeezing it out" — neutralising it.

The general impression he obtained was that the feeling of the ANC was one of hysteria. Certain movements were at work in the ANC power struggle.

He gained the impression also that Akhela was not something which had the full backing of the ANC. There appeared to be opposition to it — opposition between the nationalist and communist elements.

At the morning session, Dr Henning, appearing for Mr Breytenbach, said Mr Breytenbach would plead guilty to charges under the Terrorism Act but detailed the amendments he asked the prosecution to accept.

The amendment which Dr Yutar accepted relate mainly to the times and places of incidents.

The amendments also deleted allegations that Mr Breytenbach and his alleged co-conspirators intended to set up a communist society in South Africa, and that they were members of the African National Congress.

However, Mr Breytenbach pleaded guilty to allegations that he was an active supporter of the ANC.

The two alternative charges against Mr Breytenbach — both under the Suppression of Communism Act, fell away following the State's acceptance of the Afrikaans poet's plea of guilty.

Among the allegations left out of the amended indictment are that Mr Breytenbach:

- Asked Mrs Durten Rohm, an alleged co-conspirator, to obtain information about Cape Town Harbour and railway stations.

- Discussed with Mr Jobst Grapow, the formation of revolutionary action groups (Rag) which were intended to become involved in urban terrorism. (Mr Grapow is an alleged co-conspirator and the brother of Mrs Rohm).

- Suggested to various of his alleged co-conspirators that they undergo training in sabotage methods.

- Established cells or groups to monitor trade union developments in South Africa.

- Incited various of his co-conspirators to assist importation of explosives for sabotage.

- An allegation that Mrs Rohm was told by her brother Mr Grapow that his organisation intended to bring arms into South Africa was also deleted.

- In an allegation in the original indictment that Mr Breytenbach suggested to one of his alleged co-conspirators that an infrastructure be built to be used by the ANC or the Okhela Organisation in its armed struggle against the Government, was altered so that it did not include the word "armed".

- Among allegations to which Mr Breytenbach pleaded guilty were that: He, Mr Barend Schuitema, Mr Donald Moerdijk, Mr Jobst Grapow and Mr John Makhatini founded a White wing of the ANC which aimed at the overthrow of the White Government in South Africa and replacing it with a Black government. The organisation was called Atlas, but its name was later changed to Okhela.

- He requested Mrs Rohm to obtain details of telephone tapping and converting radio receivers to transmitters.

- He asked Mrs Rohm to act as a go between to relay messages between members of the Atlas organisation.

- He instigated Mr Robert Young, Mr Laurence Dworkin, Mr Norman Lewis and Mr Nicholas Martens — all alleged co-conspirators — to undergo training in secret methods of communication, secret methods to avoid detection, methods of resisting police interrogation, of forging documents or official stamps, of escaping when followed, of concealing documents, setting up

- a pirate radio station and eavesdropping and telephone tapping.

- That he, with others unknown drew up a document entitled The Okhela Manifesto which set out the aims of the organisation.

- He instigated various of his co-conspirators to assist persons entering and leaving the country illegally, and to supply cover addresses in South Africa to which correspondence in furtherance of the aims and objects of the organisation, could be sent.

- He instigated them to initiate an underground Press in South Africa, and to adopt code names and to communicate by means of coded messages.

- He entered South Africa using a passport issued in the name of a French citizen, Christian Marc Jean Galaska recruited members for Zokhela and propagated its aims and instigated others to do the same.

- He instigated alleged co-conspirators to attend training courses on underground skills and techniques.

- Following Mr Breytenbach's plea, Dr Henning handed in a statement containing various admissions by Mr Breytenbach, however, the statement was not read out to the court.

- Dr Yutar then gave notice that the State would nevertheless call witnesses, but far fewer than was originally intended.

- Earlier, Mrs Rohm, the State's first witness, was warned by the judge, Mr Justice Cillie, that she was regarded as an accomplice by the State, but that if she gave satisfactory evidence to the best of her ability, she would be discharged of all liability of possible charges against her.

- The wife of a former Pretoria atomic scientist, Mrs Rohm, who has been held in detention by Security Police since her arrest, told the court that she was not — as had been reported — pregnant.

- She told the court that she met her brother, Mr Grapow, in Cape Town in early 1973.

- She said she had told him that she was "feeling desperate" and asked him what she could do about the situation in South Af-

rica. He replied that if she wanted to do something, she could join a group to which he and Mr Breytenbach belonged.

He promised that Mr Breytenbach would tell her more about the group.

She said, however, that he gave her instructions about the use of secret smuggling methods, including hiding secret material inside the covers of hard cover books, and a number of other methods.

She said she had never used any of these methods, but that they included invisible writing, and hiding materials in the heels of shoes.

She said that next day, she told her brother she was frightened and was against the use of violence.

"He didn't answer, but changed the subject," she said. "To me, this was proof that what they were doing was secret and illegal, and not peaceful."

Her brother then introduced her briefly to Mr Breytenbach at Stuttafords, Cape Town, she said, and they arranged to meet in Cape Town Gardens, the following week.

When she and Mr Breytenbach met in the gardens, she said, he told her that all he knew was that she was "willing to join us," he told her. Mrs Rohm told the court, that Colour-eds looked to him as a leader, and had secretly asked him for arms.

However, he did not say whether he intended to do this, she said.

He told her that "to organise people, you must know how the country functions, its airports, its harbours, its stations."

She said he told her "we are going to bring arms in" and that she had wondered how she would hide crates of arms.

Mr Breytenbach told her that "what you scientists must do is to find out how telephones are tapped, and how to convert radio receivers into transformers, as once fighting starts our people will be in isolated groups, and will need radios to communicate."

She said they arranged to meet in the Cape Town Gardens the following week, but that Mr Breytenbach did not keep the appointment.

She said she later told her husband, Dr Ernst Rohm — who had been staying with his parents in Durban at the time of her meeting with Mr Breytenbach — that she had been contacted by terrorists in Cape Town and had been asked to join them, but that her husband did not believe her.

She said her brother told her the name of the organisation was Atlas, and that its members were South Africans in exile, some trained by members of the French resistance movement.

Her brother told her that peoples "at the base of the organisation" would receive as little information as possible so that they could not reveal much.

She said she did not know her brother's or Mr Breytenbach's position in the organisation, but that she had not thought of them as its leaders, as they were both "unreliable and idealistic."

She had gained the impression that they "liked South Africa very much and idealised Blacks who represented beauty, freedom and strength to them. She said her impression

was that people prepared to work to change South Africa were approached to become members, but that passive sympathisers were used as go-betweens, letterboxes and telephones.

On one occasion, her brother told her that he had visited the World Council of Churches' headquarters in Geneva, and had described it to her as "the most militant organisation there is".

Mr Grapow told her of the proposed formation of Rag which would be isolated groups, and that money would be provided for training these groups' members in South Africa and abroad.

Mrs Rohm told the court her brother told her, after she had typed a document on Rag which included the heading "urban terrorism (bombs)" that "we will become active in this direction soon."

Mrs Rohm said Mr Breytenbach also told her that if he was caught, he would tell police that he had come to South Africa to arrange for the publication of his new book, and that he had got his passport from a Paris gangster.

He told her that if she was caught, she should tell police that people mentioning her brother's name had been worrying her on the telephone.

When she told him she was afraid, he replied: "Yes, I understand. Your position isn't the same as your brother's but a friendly voice over the telephone is enough. It is a great help."

Mrs Rohm said Mr Breytenbach told her that "we broke into an embassy and got information about South African atomic energy."

Although the Afrikaans poet is appearing alone, the indictment against him lists 16 people and four organisations as alleged co-conspirators. Code names of alleged conspirators are also listed. Mr Breytenbach himself is alleged to have had the code name Dick.

They are: Mr Barend Schuitema (code name Jan or Nico Waterblak), 35-year-old Klerveld miner, son now living in Holland. Mr Jobst Grapow (Juliet): An alleged member of the African National Congress, now living in Europe, who allegedly accompanied Mr Breytenbach to South Africa in 1973.

Mrs Durten Rohm (Margo or Margaret), wife of a former Pretoria atomic scientist, sister of Mr Jobst Grapow.

Mr Donald Moerdijk (Jack), a Hollander and alleged member of the ANC.

Mr Gerry Mare (Tom), a member of the Nusas executive, who was studying for a Master's degree in Afrikaans literature, specialising in Mr Breytenbach's work at the time of his arrest.

Mr Oliver Thambo (The King) head of the African National Congress.

Mr Johnnie Makhatini (Eric), an overseas ANC member.

The organisations cited as co-conspirators are the African National Congress, known as Mama-Olhela (Atlas), an alleged White wing of the ANC, Solidarity and Resistance.

Eight of the alleged co-conspirators have been in detention since Security Police raids triggered by Mr Breytenbach's arrest at Jan Smuts Airport in August.

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