

'Ex-spy': I was sent to kill ANC officials with beers and a TV Poison 'plot'

Cape Times 22
11
90

JOHANNESBURG. — A man claiming to be an ex-secret agent told the Supreme Court here yesterday that he had been recruited by Military Intelligence and sent to kill ANC officials with poisoned drinks and a booby-trapped television set.

Mr Lesley Johannes Lesia said an ANC official had died from poisoned beer he took to Mozambique and that he had delivered a case of poisoned liquor to the Russian embassy in Gaborone.

He had been instructed to spill poison into the drinks of high-ranking ANC officials or, if he got the chance, to inject his victim with poison, he said.

Mr Lesia was giving evidence for the defence in the R1.5-million defamation case brought by police forensics head Lieutenant-General Lothar Neethling against Vrye Weekblad and the Weekly Mail for pub-

lishing allegations that he had supplied poison for political murders.

A gold-coloured poison ring with a swivel top and cavity to contain poison was handed in as an exhibit by the defence, who said the ring and other evidence had been released by the Zimbabwean Civil Investigation Organisation and flown to South Africa by private aircraft on Tuesday night.

Mr Lesia told the court the ring was intended to contain poison which could be spilled into drinks to eliminate ANC people.

The court was also told that a television set with explosives packed inside was given to ANC officials in Maputo, and primed to detonate on a signal from a portable radio.

It eventually exploded when plugged in in Harare, killing the wife of another Mozambique-based ANC official, the court heard.

Mr Lesia said he was arrested in Maputo in May 1987 and held in Harare for more than three years.

Documents in Mr Lesia's handwriting about meetings with his handlers told of plans to destroy "all the Communist Party big fishes in and outside SA" and for further missions in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

He claimed that one of his handlers, a Mr Bekker, gave him four glass bottles of yellow poison, two syringes, detonators to booby-trap doors and a gun and silencer with no identification number.

These were kept in a hidden compartment behind the dashboard of his car, Mr Lesia told the court.

He said he recognised General Neethling as the man Mr Bekker pointed out to him in a hotel early in 1987 as "the big boss of the police who helps us with the stuff".

The stuff, Mr Lesia said, was poisoned alcohol. He said he had been to a laboratory in Silverton, Pretoria, which Mr Bekker had said was the police forensics laboratory.

Mr Bekker had taken delivery of three cases of

beer, and a case each of brandy and vodka from a man identified only as "Jakes". Mr Lesia said he had seen many uniformed police and police vans.

He said he had been instructed by Mr Bekker to give the liquor to the ANC in Maputo. He had kept four beers and given the rest to an ANC official called Sipho.

He told the court he later saw another official, Mr Gibson Ncube, drinking one of the beers. "It gave me a shock. There was nothing I could do."

Soon after that mission to Mozambique he heard Mr Ncube had died. The wife of another ANC official had phoned to say it had looked like paralysis.

His handlers then told him to take a rigged television set to Maputo, where it was to be handed to the ANC chief representative as a present.

He gave the set to a Mr Mhlope after de-priming it and attended Mr Ncube's funeral, where he was shown top ANC officials, including current ANC constitutional expert Mr Albie Sachs. — Sapa