



Karel Tip collection

My good comrade George

In December 1996 there was a 20th anniversary celebration of the NUSAS Trial, at which President Mandela was the guest of honour. He spoke about the very positive effect on the Robben Island prisoners of the 1975 NUSAS Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners.

left to right Glenn Moss (accused), Raymond Tucker, George Bizos, Karel Tip (accused), Geoff Budlender, President Mandela, Arthur Chaskalson (obscured), Denis Kuny, Cedric de Beer (accused), Eddie Webster (accused), Ahmed Kathrada and Charles Nupen (accused).

by Karel Tip SC

My friendship with George began in December 1975. I was one of five accused in the NUSAS Trial, in which we were fortunate enough to be represented by Arthur Chaskalson, George, Denis Kuny, with Raymond Tucker as instructing attorney, together with his articled clerk Geoff Budlender, a former NUSAS leader. We were acquitted after a year-long trial. In essence, the State alleged that we had run programmes in furtherance of the aims of the ANC. One of them had particularly irked the apartheid government, being our 1974 campaign for the release of political prisoners, with a call for negotiations to be entered into with Nelson Mandela and other imprisoned leaders, in order to achieve a peaceful transition to a non-racial democracy.

As the trial proceeded, I progressively

learned of the long-standing anti-apartheid commitment of every member of our legal team. In relation to George this entailed his especially deep personal and professional relationships with Mandela and other leaders of the struggle, dating back as they did to 1948. An offshoot of this bore on the concern of the five of us that the conduct of our defence should not compromise our political convictions. George has described instances of this in his *Odyssey to Freedom* – in relation to cases very much more weighty than ours. That we shared a common view on this with our legal team contributed to the strong bonds that developed among all of us in the course of the trial year, and beyond.

Early in the trial year, I became the beneficiary of George's innate caring nature. My mother and two sisters

had journeyed to court feeling rather bewildered about how I had managed to steer my way into a criminal dock, and equally anxious about what was to become of me. My attempts at reassurance had fallen short. I then heard that George had taken them for tea twice and had gently spoken about what it was that the five of us stood for and why it was a good cause. My family went away with, above all, a feeling that they had become part of something fine and that they were happy to be there. It was an intervention that I've always treasured.

To our great pleasure, George on occasion treated the five accused to a lamb on the spit at his home. I have an enduring image of him under a white panama, briskly wielding a bunch of fresh rosemary cuttings with which he regularly basted the slowly turning and