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The Thinker

F O R T H O U G H T L E A D E R S



LEST WE FORGET

Thabo Mbeki Dali Tambo **Simphiwe Nyanda** Aboobaker Ismail **Tokyo Sexwale**
Wally Serote **Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse** Stuart Round **Damian de Lange**
Greg Houston **Wayne Alexander** David Brown **Danny Schecter**
Baleka Mbete **Busani Ngcaweni** Gugu Ndima **Bongani Mkongi**

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On the Cover:

Heroes of our Struggle

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Lest we Forget

Comrade President OR Tambo is, in the considered view of many of those who had the privilege and honour of working with him and under his leadership, the greatest South African that ever lived.

OR Tambo was a humble, self-effacing, indomitable, loyal, highly disciplined and pre-eminent leader of the ANC and its alliance partners. He was an iconic freedom fighter, a great Pan-Africanist and a remarkable internationalist.

During the most difficult days of our struggle, when the apartheid regime boasted that they had permanently crushed the resistance movement, OR kept the fires burning. His leadership style was unique and very different from the more typical forceful and commanding style adopted by many politicians. Whilst firm in carrying out decisions, he did not rush when making them. First he listened carefully to all relevant parties and considered possible options. He was flexible and responsive, rather than autocratic or doctrinaire.

Living in, and operating from, exile was an exceptionally daunting task as exiles were cut off from the life-blood and direct support of the popular masses. For the ANC, SACP and SACTU to maintain their unity, coherence and battle readiness required great patience, fortitude and optimism.

In history many organisations and movements that operated from exile were severely weakened by internal dissension and split into warring factions. However, owing to the leadership of OR, notwithstanding severe problems and internal battles, the ANC remained a unified and respected political force which could not be ignored or side-lined. It was this consistent integrity that enabled the ANC to play a dominant role in the struggle for national liberation and in mobilising international solidarity.

Comrade OR played a critical role in building and maintaining the

alliance with the SACP. He had a genuine and deep working relationship with giants of the SACP such as Moses Kotane, JB Marks, Yusuf Dadoo, Moses Mabidha, Dan Tloome, Duma Nokwe, Joe Slovo and Chris Hani. He refused to succumb to intense anti-communist pressures from a number of narrow-minded nationalists, leaders in Africa and the major western powers. OR was a true friend of the Soviet Union, Cuba, China and the other socialist countries.

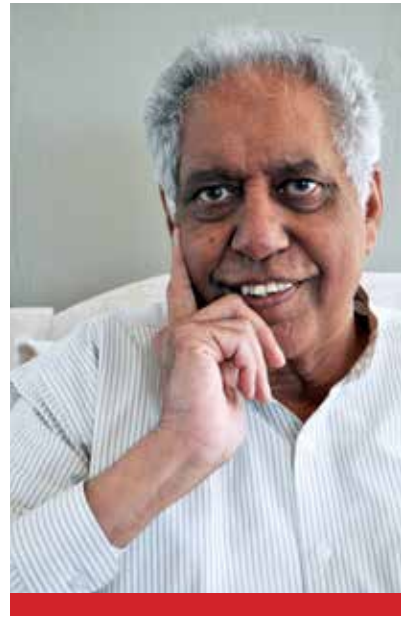
More than any other individual he painstakingly developed relations with Sweden and other social-democratic countries, parties and trade unions in Europe. At a time when some African leaders were sceptical if not hostile to the ANC's policy of non-racialism, OR worked tirelessly to win them over. And he did.

In this issue we publish articles by Dali Tambo, Thabo Mbeki, Tokyo Sexwale, Wally Serote, Greg Houston and Wayne Alexander covering different aspects of the extraordinary contribution of President OR Tambo to the struggle in South Africa. We also print a poem written in his honour by Baleka Mbete.

Each contribution reveals different aspects of OR's character, personality and achievements – some of them not widely known. In a moving tribute to his parents Dali says: "My father was one of greatest and first environmentalists. Because his whole philosophy was that if you were created by God, your right to life was self-evident, was a given."

Thabo Mbeki who worked very closely with Tambo for over 25 years writes: "An important part of Oliver Tambo's life coincided with critical and defining moments in the evolution of our struggle, each imposing an obligation on our movement, the ANC, to respond in a creative and decisive manner, fully cognisant of our possibilities and constraints."

Wally Serote vividly captures the feelings of those who knew and worked with OR when he writes: "I wanted to



listen to people, the way OR listened to people; I wanted to ask questions, the way OR asked questions; I wanted to care about people the way he cared about them."

Tokyo Sexwale reveals publicly for the first time the true (initially suppressed) opinion of one of OR's erstwhile opponents – George Schultz, former US Secretary of State under Ronald Reagan – about the impact of his first meeting with OR on himself and his team and subsequently on US foreign policy towards Africa as a whole. They had been briefed by the CIA to expect an angry, violent, poorly educated and greedy terrorist. Imagine their astonishment...

This edition is in two parts. The second part narrates some episodes of the danger, courage, bravery and ingenuity required to infiltrate arms, ammunition equipment and personnel into the country. Stuart Round, David Brown, Damian de Lange, Siphon 'Hotstix' Mabuse and Danny Schechter reflect on the exploits, heroism and daring of the internationalists who were ready to sacrifice their lives if necessary, in the struggle against the apartheid regime. The role played by individual internationalists (from the West, the frontline states and the socialist countries) should serve as a constant reminder that international solidarity is an integral part of our movement's DNA. This should

strengthen our commitment to respond readily to the struggles of those in other countries, as well as our own people. In this respect we should not hesitate to offer support and assistance to the gallant and embattled Palestinians and the heroic people of Cuba.

Siphiwe Nyanda and Aboobaker Ismail (Rashid) give compelling accounts of the courage and ingenuity required to infiltrate weapons into South Africa as well as carrying out daring acts of sabotage. Siphiwe, in describing how they had to conceal weapons under different guises, writes: "It was almost impossible to stumble upon and uncover our depot when we had finished working on it. We made certain to pad the area to harden the surface. You could walk over it without

feeling any difference although we often would throw tree branches and little rocks to dissuade people from trampling over the area, especially in the immediate aftermath of the completion of the task."

Aboobaker, in recounting the value of successful MK operations writes: "The success of the operation was overwhelming in its armed propaganda value, achieving the objective of winning the support of the people, of showing that the enemy was not invincible. The ANC was able to call on the people for greater involvement in the struggle, spurring them on to people's power. One could sense a sea-change in the attitudes of ordinary people in the townships."

Damian de Lange reminds us of

the debt we owe to our neighbours, citizens of the frontline states, who "were the water in which the MK swam like fish".

Sipho Mabuse narrates a personal journey on transporting arms and MK militants from Johannesburg to Cape Town. He describes in detail a hair-raising narrow escape from detection on the journey at a police road-block. One can feel his relief: "Phew!!! We survived; we arrived in Cape Town, in the early hours of the morning."

The articles in this issue should serve as an antidote to those historians, commentators and analysts who still seek to belittle and undermine the role played by President OR Tambo and MK in the struggle to defeat an obnoxious racist regime, its military and security forces and their supporters and backers in the major western countries.

A new beginning

This is the last issue of *The Thinker* as a monthly. From January 2014 we will publish it as a Pan-African quarterly. It will be pan-African in form, content, diversity of authors and distribution.

We take this opportunity to thank all those who wrote for our journal. Without their support and contributions the journal would not have established its good reputation - and wide readership amongst people who care to think about what is happening and where we are going in South Africa, Africa and the world.

We also express our deep gratitude to the advertisers and sponsors. In particular we must mention our core advertisers. OASIS, South African Breweries, DHL and Supersport. Without their support we would not have survived.

We take some satisfaction in the fact that we have produced 58 editions and published not only contributions by well-known academics and analysts, but also by some 60 young writers, mainly African South Africans. It has been a worth-while journey.

We continue this journey as a Pan-African quarterly. We will continue to publish well-known analysts and writers, as well as encouraging young Africans to write and become active participants in public discourse, debate and exchange of views. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Thinker

F O R T H O U G H T L E A D E R S

A PAN - AFRICAN QUARTERLY

After a lengthy process of consultation with a number of people including our core advertisers and leading contributors we have decided to turn *The Thinker* from a monthly into a Pan-African quarterly.

It will be Pan-African in form, content, diversity of authors and distribution. We shall endeavour to produce a high quality, authoritative journal which will critically analyse and comment upon the political, economic, social and cultural developments, challenges and opportunities in our continent.

We shall retain our commitment to encouraging young writers from South Africa and the continent to be active participants in public discourse, debate and exchange of views.

We shall devote special attention to the on-going processes for an African Agenda and the African Renaissance. We hope to assist the continent to find African responses and solutions to African challenges, problems and conflicts.

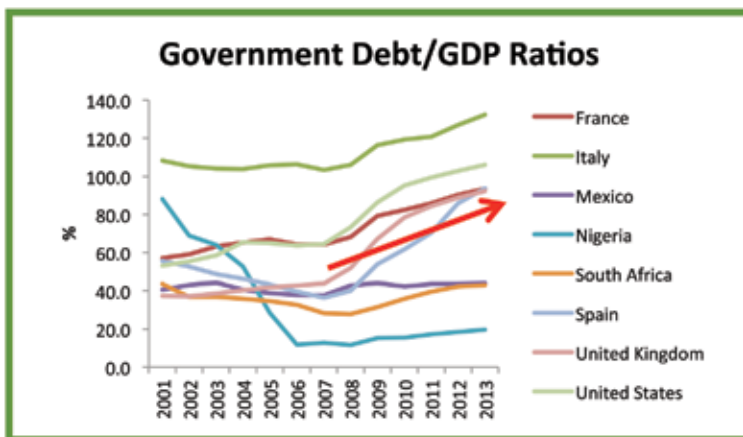


THE INAUGURAL ISSUE WILL BE
PUBLISHED IN JANUARY 2014.

The changing role of government

Following the global financial crisis of 2008/09, governments around the world ramped up expenditure. This was in line with popular Keynesian economic theory, which holds that the public sector should play an important countercyclical role in the economy, raising the demand for goods and services when the private sector is least willing to do so, and conversely, cutting back when confidence and private activity is booming.

The scramble by governments to keep their economies going resulted in a massive ramp-up in public sector debt in most of the world's major economies. South Africa was no exception, with general government debt as a proportion of GDP rising from 28% in 2007 to an estimated 43% in 2013, moving above the emerging market average in the process.



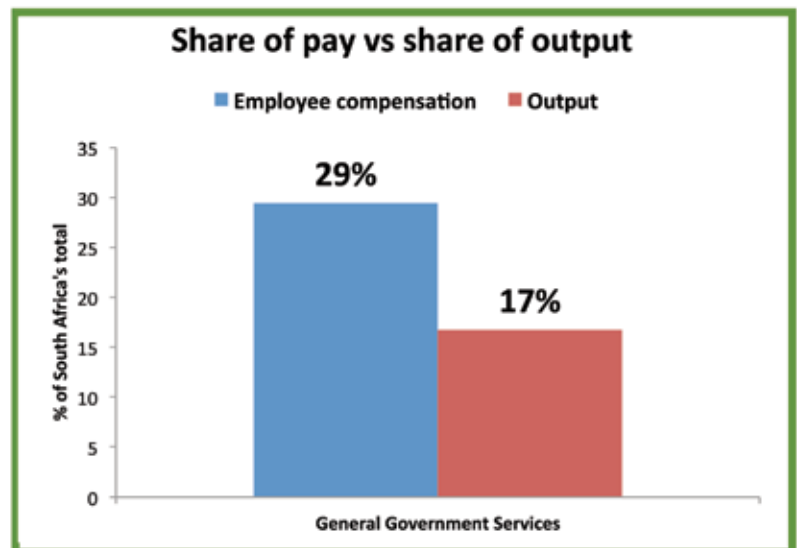
Source: Oasis Research using IMF, 2013

The boost to aggregate demand that came with the fiscal stimulus, in the consensus view, probably saved many economies from deeper and longer periods of recession. However, in a world of rising interest rates, the deleveraging process is going to require a far more disciplined stance on both government revenues and expenditure. In addition, amid the household-driven GDP growth disappointments that our economy has experienced this year, the South African public sector will need to be particularly savvy in order to avoid putting further unnecessary pressure on the economy at large.

One area where there is significant potential for improvement is in the mix of public expenditure. To put the argument in context, according to the most recent GDP figures from Stats SA, the general government services sector accounts for 17% of total economic output. Despite this, employees working in this sector account for 29% of

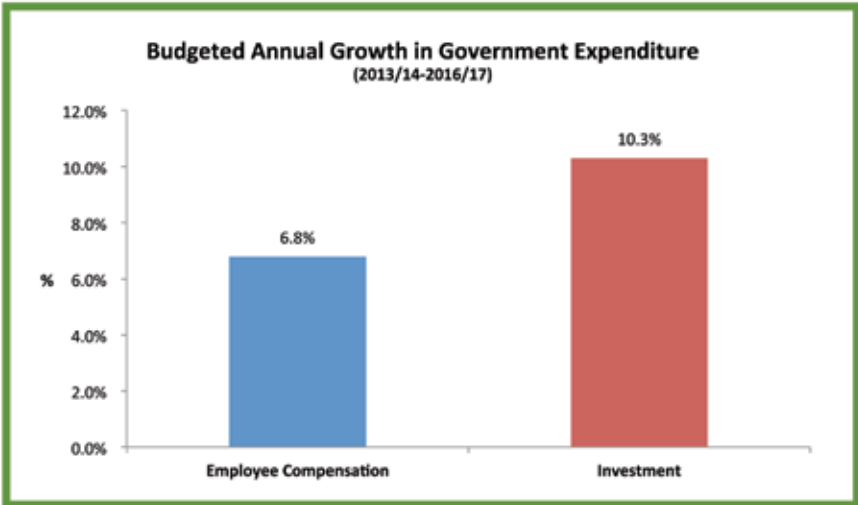
total employee compensation in the country. A part of this discrepancy may be accounted for by the fact that government services are typically conducted in areas where it would be unprofitable for private sector firms to operate, so that gross operating surpluses are low and a higher proportion of revenues are paid to employees. Nevertheless, the sheer size of this difference suggests that the link between pay and productivity in government services is the weakest of all the key sectors within the broader economy. Indeed, the sector with the second highest discrepancy – manufacturing – produces 16% of total output and pays its employees 12% of total compensation.

Importantly, recent budget statements identify the unsustainable trend in current expenditures as a key threat to medium term budget stability. Spending projections to 2016/17 reflect this fact, with employee compensation budgeted to grow by 6.8% per year, on average, so that growth in real terms could hover



Source: Oasis Research using Stats SA, 2013

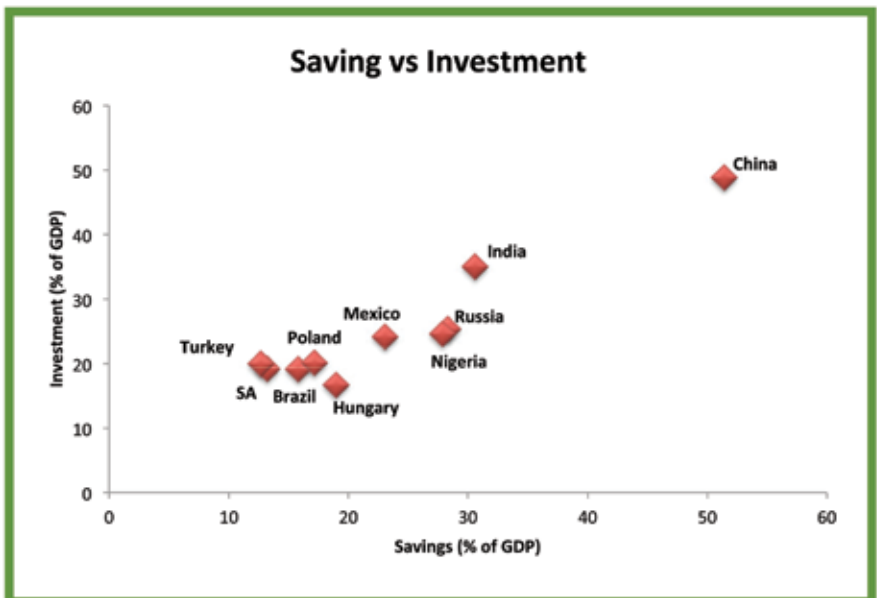
around just 1%. In the February budget, it was announced that social grants would increase by between 4% and 5% in nominal terms this fiscal year, which in real terms means that those who rely exclusively on these grants have experienced negative growth in their income.



Source: Oasis Research using National Treasury, 2013

Implementing these policies over the medium term will clearly require a very delicate balancing act. To counter the negative impact on economic activity and social welfare, the government needs to ensure that it generates more economic value for each Rand that it does spend. In this regard, there has been recent progress as well. Investment expenditure – crucial for the development of infrastructure – is budgeted to grow by 10.3% per year over the next three years. Our state owned enterprises, including Transnet and Eskom, are playing a key role in ensuring that South Africa has the capacity to grow at the required 5% to reduce the unemployment rate to 6% by 2030. These projects, sustained by the overarching vision of the National Development Plan, are central to our country’s economic future. Ultimately, however, our economic prosperity depends more critically on a robust private sector, able to compete in a globalised world while driving investment and

containing inflationary pressures. If government succeeds in its drive to develop a stronger infrastructure base over the medium term, private sector confidence will pick up, creating a virtuous cycle of capacity investment and growth in demand. If it successfully manages the process of weaning a massive section of society off of its reliance on the social grant system, savings rates will rise in the country, allowing the country to invest more, without a heavy reliance on foreign capital. These developments will put South Africa in a position to flourish on the global stage. To achieve them, government’s



Source: Oasis Research using IMF, 2013

role needs to start shifting from protector to enabler of the South African people. ■

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All contributing analysts write in their personal capacity



Dr Wayne Alexander completed a National Diploma in Food Technology and has a BA (Hons), an H Dip Ed, a Master's and a PhD in Education. After being in the field of education (teacher, project manager, lecturer, chief curriculum advisor) for over twenty years he joined the Iziko Museums of South Africa as the Director of Education and Public Programmes.

David Max Brown is the director and owner of Maxi-D Productions. He grew up in exile in England with his family. In 1982 David joined the ANC and went to work at their school in Morogoro, Tanzania, as a photographer and teacher. David later worked in television in the UK (1988-90) and went to live in Swaziland in 1990 where he opened "Eye to Eye TV productions". He returned to South Africa in 1998 and has since produced a TV drama series, documentaries and feature films.

Damian de Lange was born in Zambia and educated in South Africa. After working in the mines and as a journalist on the *Rand Daily Mail* he joined Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1981, and served in Angola, Swaziland and inside South Africa. His unit was captured in 1988 and he was sentenced to 25 years. In 1994 he integrated into the new SANDF where he rose to the rank of Brigadier General before his early retirement in 2004. Damian has a degree in sociology and anthropology and a Master's in International Studies. He is married, has five children and lives in Johannesburg.

Dr Gregory Houston is a previous Executive Director of the South African Democracy Education Trust and has contributed chapters to five of SADET's six volumes. He is a chief research specialist at the HSRC, and

holds a PhD in political science from the University of Natal. Dr Houston authored *The National Liberation Struggle in South Africa: A case study of the UDF, 1983-87* and co-edited *Public Participation in Democratic Governance in South Africa*.

Aboobaker Ismail, aka 'Rashid', was part of the ANC underground structures from 1974 onwards and went into exile in 1976. He served as a Chief Instructor in MK camps in Angola and in 1980 was appointed as Commissar of the Special Operations Unit. In 1983 he was appointed Commander of Special Operations. In 1987 Rashid was appointed as Chief of Ordnance to the Military Headquarters of MK. He was part of the team that negotiated the integration of the different armed forces in SA into the SANDF.

Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse got his start in the African soul group 'the Beaters' in the mid-1970s. After a successful tour of Zimbabwe they changed the group's name to Harari. He has recorded and produced for, amongst others, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Ray Phiri and Sibongile Khumalo. Mabuse's "Burn Out" in the early 1980s sold over 500,000 copies; another giant (Disco Shangaan) hit was "Jive Soweto". Mabuse returned to secondary school at the age of 60 and is now studying anthropology at university.

Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki was Deputy President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999 and President from 1999 to September 2008. He was for over three decades a member of the NEC of the ANC. Mbeki was the architect of NEPAD and the India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) forum. He has mediated in African conflict situations including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Ivory Coast and Sudan and

Southern Sudan. Currently he chairs the UN Economic Commission on Africa panel to investigate and report to African leaders on the illegal export of capital and money-laundering.

Bongani Mkongi is currently Chief of Staff in the Office of the Minister of Sport and Recreation. In 2009, after the Elections, Bongani was appointed Head in the Office of the Deputy Minister of Police after serving as an ANC MP from 2004 - 2009. He sits on the Social Transformation Committee (STC) of the ANC. He has a Higher Diploma in Commerce Education and a BTech in Commercial Studies.

Gugu Ndima has written for publications such as *The Times*, *Sunday Independent* and the *Mail and Guardian*. She has served in the ANCYL structures. She was nominated in the '200 Young South Africans' *Mail and Guardian* newspaper feature in 2010 and received from the CEO magazine the meritorious award as a leader of tomorrow. She now serves as a Spokesperson in the Office of the Speaker in the Gauteng Legislature.

Busani Ngcaweni currently heads the Office of the Deputy President of South Africa. Before that he served as Manager of Strategy and Special Projects in the same office. Ngcaweni has a BED from the then Durban-Westville University and an MSc in Urban and Regional Planning from the School of Development Studies, Natal University (merged with UDW to form the University of KwaZulu-Natal). He is a Fellow of the Duke and Cape Town Universities Emerging Leaders Programme.

General Siphiwe Nyanda was the Minister of Communications from 2009-2010 and is presently parliamentary counsellor to President Zuma. He joined MK in 1974 and served as a field commander during the 1980s. As MK Chief of Staff from 1992 he served on the Transitional Executive Council which oversaw the change of government in 1994. He was Chief of Defence Force Staff from 1994-1996 and was promoted until he became Chief of the SANDF from 1998-2005.

The Thinker

F O R T H O U G H T L E A D E R S

In 1999 General Nyanda was awarded the Order of the Star of South Africa (Gold).

Stuart Round was one of the British recruits who assisted the ANC by smuggling arms into the country. In 2003 he was appointed to work as an event and project manager at the SA High Commission in London, a position he held for seven years. He is now the Director of CIDA Foundation UK, a UK based charity which supports CIDA City Campus which provides virtually free tertiary education to students from rural communities and townships all over South Africa.

Danny Schechter continues to be engaged with South Africa. He produced the weekly *South Africa Now* TV series between 1989 and 1991, and helped produce the album "Sun City: Artists Against Apartheid". He is finishing a 5 hour TV series as a companion the movie *Mandela: The Long Walk To Freedom*. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org.

Dr. Mongane Wally Serote is a South African poet and writer. In 1973 he won the Ingrid Jonker Poetry prize. As a Fulbright Scholar, he obtained a Fine Arts Degree at Columbia University in 1979. In 1993, he won the "Noma" Award for publishing in Africa. He served as Chair of the Parliamentary Select Committee for Arts and Culture and was formerly the CEO of Freedom Park, a national heritage site. His written works include several acclaimed novels, volumes of poetry and a collection of essays. In August 2012, he was awarded the prestigious Golden Wreath Award.

Mosima Gabriel "Tokyo" Sexwale is a business man, a politician and a freedom fighter. He was imprisoned on Robben Island for his activities as an MK combatant. In 1994 he became the Premier of Gauteng province. He served as Minister of Human Settlements from 2009 to 2013. He was a member of the Local Organising Committee for the 2010 World Cup. Sexwale has served on the NEC of the ANC. He is a trustee of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Global Philanthropist Circle of the Synergos Institute, the Business Trust and the Robben Island Ex-Prisoners Trust.

Dali Tambo is the son of Oliver and Adelaide Tambo. Dali is a South African businessman, activist, producer and television personality. He has a BA in International Affairs and Political Science from the University of Paris and subsequently worked in film and television in the UK on productions such as Richard Attenborough's 'Cry Freedom'. He is also the founder of Artists Against Apartheid. His work continued to develop back in South Africa, where he is possibly best known for hosting the successful talk show, 'People of the South'. ■

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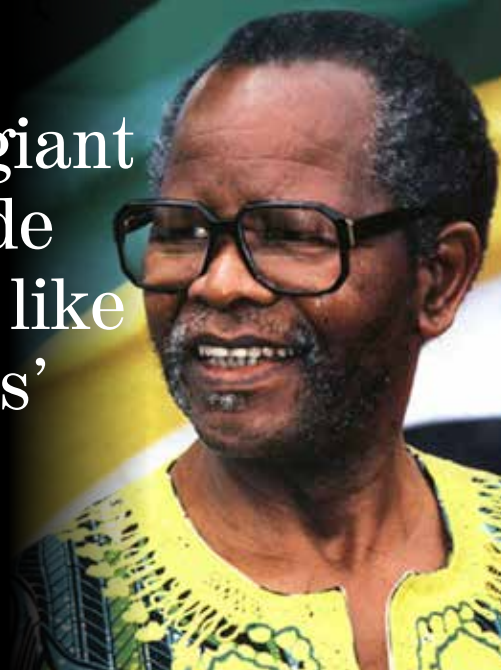
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OLIVER TAMBO

‘A great giant who strode the globe like a colossus’



I am immensely privileged that I had the opportunity to interact with and learn many lifelong lessons from Oliver Tambo during the 31 years from 1962 until he passed away in 1993, which encompassed many of the years when OR led our movement during some of the most critical moments in its history.

By Thabo Mbeki

The ANC sent Oliver Tambo into exile in 1960, shortly after the Sharpeville massacre. Our leadership expected that the apartheid regime would carry out a campaign of extreme repression to destroy the ANC. It therefore took the decision to locate its Deputy President outside the country to ensure that the ANC would continue to exist and pursue our struggle until victory was won.

I, and others, followed Oliver Tambo into exile in 1962, two-and-half years after he had left. Like him, we were sent out of the country by the ANC, but on a different mission. We were sent out as students charged with the task to study and acquire skills that

a liberated South Africa would need.

The fears of the ANC leadership in 1960 had been proved correct. By 1962 our struggle was facing difficult challenges as a result of the apartheid regime's sustained campaign of repression, which was destined to get worse. As members of the ANC Youth League we were very determined to contribute to the effort to defeat this campaign of repression and intensify the struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution. Because of this, I was among those of our youth who tried to resist leaving the country to study.

In the end Walter Sisulu directed me to meet two of our leaders, Duma

Nokwe and Govan Mbeki, who conveyed the instruction, rather than a proposal of the movement, that I should leave the country. To accommodate my concerns, they undertook that Oliver Tambo would discuss my future with me when I had completed my first year at university in the UK.

On our way out of South Africa, I met the late Joe Modise in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, now Botswana, where he had delivered a new batch of MK recruits. Having returned to Bechuanaland after detention in Southern Rhodesia, present day Zimbabwe, I was convinced that this gave me just cause to return home, arguing that our attempt to leave the country had failed.

Modise, already a member of the then very secretive MK, refused to assist me to return home. Instead he argued in a stern voice that my task was to proceed to the UK as I had been instructed. He made no effort to hide his displeasure at my attempt to persuade him to cooperate in what he considered would be an act of indiscipline.

I first met Oliver Tambo, OR, when we arrived in Dar es Salaam in 1962. As I had been advised, he told me that we would discuss my future when I had completed my first year at university.

One of the passengers on the plane on which I flew out to London to begin my studies was Dr Kenneth Kaunda, KK, later to become President of independent Zambia. At Dar es Salaam airport, in the presence of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, OR handed me over to KK saying that he would take care of me during the flight to London.

As promised, at the end of my first year at university, in 1963, OR met me in London. Because I insisted that I wanted to join MK, and return home to fight, he agreed that I should terminate my studies. When I informed the university accordingly, it opposed the decision strenuously.

A little more than a week before the university reopened, I received fresh instructions from OR stating that the leadership had reviewed our decision and decided that I should return to university, which I did. In the end this instruction was repeated until I had completed my Master of Arts degree in 1966.

Eight years later, in 1974, the

Swedish Liberal Party held an international symposium in Stockholm, which OR had been invited to address. However, he sent an instruction to me to attend in his place. This was during the very week when Zanele and I got married. Despite my protests, which OR rebuffed by insisting on the need to respect the decisions of the ANC, I went to Stockholm as directed.

I returned to Africa in 1971, having stayed in Europe since the early days of my exile in 1962. I came back to the ANC headquarters in Lusaka, Zambia, to serve in the Revolutionary Council as Deputy Secretary to the late Moses Mabhidha, with the Council chaired by Oliver Tambo.

Later, appointed to work as Political Secretary to the Acting President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, I had the responsibility of preparing the drafts of OR's public speeches and the major public documents of our movement.

This work demanded intimate understanding of the strategic and tactical tasks of the movement, the contemporary balance of forces at home and abroad, our objective challenges at all moments, and what the leader of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, would have to say publicly, bearing in mind our domestic and international tasks and audiences, in order to sustain the advance of our struggle.

Many a time I had to live with the embarrassment of OR completely rejecting my draft texts and, on a number of occasions, using his own notes to deliver addresses radically different from the draft speeches I had prepared.

Many a time I had to spend numerous hours with him to discuss specific formulations used in the draft texts, which he thought represented a careless or imprecise use of words, or inaccurate understanding of our movement's policies, history, tradition and values.

Fifteen years after the 1974 Stockholm symposium, in 1989, and having worked with him for many years by then, I visited OR in London as he was recuperating from his stroke. This had occurred soon after we had completed a gruelling trip through a number of countries of southern Africa. We undertook this trip to consult the

Front-line States on a document we had drafted under OR's leadership, which was ultimately called the Harare Declaration. This Declaration served as the basis on which we engaged the apartheid regime in negotiations, starting with the secret discussions in 1989, mainly with the National Intelligence Service.

After the consultations with the Front-line States of southern Africa, the Harare Declaration was adopted by the UDF and the rest of the mass democratic movement in South Africa, the OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement and the General Assembly of the UN.

President Kaunda understood both the importance and urgency of our mission and provided us with a plane to help us undertake our tour of southern Africa. The government of Zambia took care of the costs of the plane while the governments of our region hosted us in all the countries we visited.

Our first meeting in Dar es Salaam was with a government delegation led by the then Prime Minister, Salim Ahmed Salim. When we went to bed that night, our delegation, with the exception of OR, was somewhat depressed. This was because the Tanzanian government delegation had expressed great scepticism at the very idea of engaging the apartheid regime in negotiations.

The following day we met Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. After a presentation by OR, Mwalimu expressed full support for the initiative we had taken. He made a critically important suggestion, which our NEC finally supported, that our document and negotiating stance should recognise the strategic reality that as much as the apartheid regime had not defeated the liberation movement, neither had our movement defeated the white minority regime.

There will be other occasions to make a proper assessment of the impact on our struggle and the evolution of our democracy of the strategic intervention that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere made as we prepared to engage the apartheid regime in a new form of struggle centred on the peaceful transfer of power to the people.

As I have said, I visited OR in London in 1989 as he was recuperating from his stroke. On this occasion we

discussed that our movement was faced with conducting our struggle in new and complex circumstances. He then communicated another mission, the most challenging since I first met him in Dar es Salaam 27 years earlier: look after the ANC and make sure we succeed. You will know what needs to be done.

On OR's instruction, in 1989 I began talking to Madiba, Nelson Mandela, by phone, while he was in prison. We continued this telephone contact after he was released in 1990, before I returned home. I must presume that OR authorised this contact to ensure that because of the guidance that his life-long friend and comrade, Madiba, would provide, I would not make mistakes that would compromise the advance of our struggle and revolution.

An important part of Oliver Tambo's life coincided with critical and defining moments in the evolution of our struggle, each imposing an obligation on our movement, the ANC, to respond in a creative and decisive manner, fully cognisant of our possibilities and constraints.

I am immensely privileged that I had the opportunity to interact with and learn many lifelong lessons from Oliver Tambo during the 31 years from 1962 until he passed away in 1993, which encompassed many of the years when OR led our movement during some of the most critical moments in its history.

It might appear to the casual reader of this contribution to this book of tribute to Oliver Tambo, on what would have been his 90th birthday, that this humble piece is more about myself rather than the immortal hero of our struggle, Oliver Reginald Tambo.

However, the personal stories I have told relate a relationship which positions OR as the subject, and myself as the object of policies and actions that throw light on the character of the subject of this important book, one of the most important founders of democratic South Africa, OR Tambo. ■

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THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL**A partnership forged in Struggle**

Oliver and Adelaide Tambo at their wedding reception

Although a side of my sister's Thembi, Tselane and myself will never recover from the timing of our father's passing, almost a year to the day before the first democratic elections in 1994, we loved every moment of being his children, we loved every inch of his being, and we could not imagine a greater father.

By Dali Tambo

I drink. My father didn't.

So when I started going to pubs with friends, my mother took occasion to complain to my father. He sat me down and in his gentle way discussed it with me.

'What is a pub?' he asked to my amazement. Being a lifelong teetotaler, he had no concept.

I said, 'It's a place where you go to socialise with friends.'

'But your mother says you drink alcohol there, why do you spend the whole evening drinking, can't you just have an orange juice and go? Why must you drink without the provocation of thirst?'

At the end of the conversation he said he would consult with my uncle and speak to me on his next visit. Little did I know that the uncle he would consult was Archbishop Trevor Huddleston.

The next time I saw my father he said that Huddleston had said it was fine as long as I didn't get drunk. I promised him I would quench my thirst in a pub and swiftly move on.

Life is full of broken promises.

I knew the human side of the movement before I totally understood the political. Through my parents, although I was isolated at boarding schools from the age of six, when at

home I enjoyed a huge family of South Africans – mostly ANC exiles, as my Uncles and Aunts, brothers and sisters – because of their relationships with and love for my parents.

So, when my parents passed away, first my father and then my mother, I remember feeling strange because one of my emotions was what an incredible knowledge bank and resource of struggle history, the personal and the political, had gone with them.

In my mother's case she had an incredible memory, and she could tell you what she was wearing in 1962 or 1959 at a certain café or restaurant and what Winnie was wearing – fine detail.

She had a photographic memory. She spoke nine languages and Afrikaners would love and warm to her, because in her own quirky way, she would speak their language, in a way that would always make them smile, I noticed.

She had a great memory for events and stories, she was a great raconteur, and always included humour in her stories.

So one of my regrets was that I did not persuade her, even though I tried, to let a ghostwriter write a book about her life from her perspective. I introduced her to a couple of female writers, journalists, but it never happened.

With my father I also felt that great sense of wasted history and with him too, I had tried to get him to write a book and my mother and I had determined one time to sit down with him, which we did, to try and persuade him to put his thoughts down in a book. This was before his stroke, and he did go so far as recording numerous hours of his memories, but never got past the days of his youth.

My mother said to him, 'If you don't write this book, other people will steal your victories and claim your victories as their own,' and I said to him that 'Dad, I know the media and what you don't record will be forgotten. You need to do this.'

He turned sharply and looked at me and said to my mother and to me, 'There is a struggle to be waged and if I am to take time out to write a book, then Nzo, and Slovo, and all the others, could also take time out to write a book. But that is not our priority. Let others record what we did and who we were.'

So he was very stubborn, and as predicted others have had to interpret the lives of my mother and father. Which is a source of great regret to me as I believe that each of their books would today be national treasures.

My mother never wanted to leave South Africa. She had been warned, by her family, not to marry Oliver, that he was trouble. And she said to them, 'But he's a lawyer!'

It was a marriage that was made in Struggle. She was an activist for the ANC and he was a leader. They fell in

love, but when they were setting the date for the marriage, he was in jail. She said to me, she told the jailers, 'I don't care if he is in jail or out, this is the wedding date and I will marry him in jail if necessary.'

Fortunately he was released, but under a banning order. So she had the most unique of weddings, where her husband was not allowed to speak, because he was under this banning order, so the best man had to give his speech for him.

And so I always think back on my mother's life, on how much they loved each other, on their joint understanding and commitment to the struggle. And yet on the years of personal pain that the loneliness, separation and the Struggle inflicted on her.

“She said to me, she told the jailers, ‘I don’t care if he is in jail or out, this is the wedding date and I will marry him in jail if necessary.’”

It was a life of constant poverty and work in London. She would often work two shifts, her colleagues at the hospital would cover for her, so that when she finished the night shift, she would go into a room at the hospital, sleep for two to three hours and then start the day shift. Until her friends and the doctors put a stop to it.

She would do agency work after that, often not telling the agency that she had just come off a shift before she would go on to theirs. At the same time it was a life where she was the matriarch of a community of exiles, who had arrived in England for various reasons, and who came from all kinds of political formations, and they became the family and community that she left in South Africa in many ways.

So I saw my mother bury many exiles, marry many exiles, attend baptisms, comfort, get scholarships for young people, gather clothes and toiletries and all kinds of other accessories for the women in the camps

and generally take on the responsibility for young and old as long as they were South African.

I also saw the way she bridged the political divide and how so many white South Africans living in England became her friends and understood our perspective and our struggle through her.

Whenever my father was in town and we would have a lunch or a dinner at the house, he was the quiet one who would sit at the head of the table and engage in conversation but not provoke it. It was my mother's table and she held court, and was a very entertaining host, always making people laugh, telling stories.

And when it was ANC people, the Johnny Makhatinis, the Thabo Mbekis, the Pahads, the Jordans and others, there were so many who would come for meetings with my father, I would serve tea and drinks and although my father didn't drink, and nor did my mother, she always kept alcohol in the house and yet did not know how to pour it when it was spirits and the mixes. So these guys would always say, 'It's okay Mama, Dali will serve us,' because they knew we had a code; it was not protocol to drink or smoke in front of my father. He would never object, but people wouldn't do it openly.

So we had this code whereby if I was asked for ginger ale, I knew it was whisky soda, if I was asked for lemonade, I knew it was vodka tonic or gin and tonic. And because I also did not know what the measures were, I would always do 50/50. So they always asked to be served by me.

My mother loved her house full. So whether it was the party she threw for Thabo and Zanele when they got married or the fact that my father would arrive and suddenly the house would swell to capacity with people who wanted to see him. Or it was Christmas and the bedrooms and hallways were full of South African students and ANC people on holiday who had come for Christmas day, she always wanted her house full. And I saw her at her happiest when she was amongst her people.

She was lonely in a way. Lonely for her husband. And my father was the

kind of person who was always worried about promoting his wife, or even his children. So on many occasions when they would be invited together, he would go alone, or take another ANC person.

So when it was time for him to depart, or two days before, the problems and issues that my mother was facing, she would choose to discuss then. And I'll never forget one time, when she was telling him about all the financial problems and children problems that she was facing, he said to her 'Don't worry, Dilly (term of endearment for her name, Adelaide), God will provide.' Which sent her into a temper and she shouted at him, 'What do you mean, God will provide? I must provide! And I alone.'

And they would discuss personal and political issues into the night, and then we would hear them praying and often singing hymns, African hymns and Church hymns, sometimes for two hours. She trusted him implicitly, that his Christian morals and ethics meant that although ladies might try it on him, they would never succeed. She knew his love and his loyalty was total. And he recognised what she was going through. And it tortured him.

So sometimes, before he was going, my mom would deliberately the day before or that morning start a row. And as I got older I began to understand it was partly her pain about him going again, and the fact that it would be months before she saw him again.

And it was partly to cover her sadness, so that she did not cry. So they would have a row, but she would be the only one rowing, because he was leaving again with so many problems left unresolved. He would be quiet and console her. And yet she would send him away with love and once they had driven off, she would go to the kitchen, and sometimes comfort eat. And sometimes shed a tear.

But as soon as I walked in, or my sisters did, it was back to normal. My mother did not like to show her pain to us. She spent a long time on the phone talking to her friends, and that was where she would get it off her chest.

My father was one of the greatest and first environmentalists. Because his whole philosophy was that if you were

created by God, your right to life was self-evident, was a given.

So we were taught not to kill insects and animals, bees, wasps, flies, moths, to the point where one time he was on the phone, I was chasing this moth trying to hit it, and he came off the phone, and I was about to stomp it, kill it, and he said to me, 'Why are you doing that, take that moth gently outside and put it on a leaf so it can eat.'

Another time, we had a visitor, from another African country, and I was in the lounge serving tea for them, and this visitor swatted a fly and killed it. And my father said to him, 'Why did you do that?' And with a straight face he said, 'That's my wildlife. Please don't kill my wildlife.' I laughed but the visitor was shocked and only relaxed when my father started smiling.

And then another time, there was an ants' nest. I had deliberately spilled some fizzy drinks around it and things

“She knew his love and his loyalty was total. And he recognised what she was going through. And it tortured him.”

they would like, and they were all over this food, and then I put some paraffin and set them alight. And he was watching me from the window of the house and again he came down and challenged me, and explained to me that I had destroyed a city, with a whole life system going on and that these ants have mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters. He told me in a way that a child can understand, that I must respect their life. And I felt guilty about it.

The next day I wrote a poem about it, about how I didn't just destroy some ants, I committed genocide. And I gave him that poem as an apology.

When I was young, at boarding school, at the convent, up until I was about eight or nine years old, my mother would tell me to tell people that my father was a lawyer and there really was no mention of the Struggle.

But the nuns knew, and I think to

simplify it for a child, my mother said, 'Your father is a lawyer.'

By the time I was between 10 and 12, on my holidays, I would go up to his office, sometimes spend four to five hours up there, reading his letters, his notes, his speeches, copies of *Sechaba*, the ANC journal at the time, and copies of policy documents. Sometimes I felt like a spy. But I delighted in the expression on his face, when he would come back to London and I would sit with him and I would ask him about some aspect of the Struggle. That he had no clue I knew about. And his delight in explaining it to me.

And when he would leave, my last words were always testosterone filled. I would say things like, 'Give them hell, Dad. Kick their asses!'

And one time he stopped and came back to me and said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'You know, kill them.'

And he said, 'No that is not what we are about,' and gave me a two-minute lecture, basically saying to me, 'Don't say that again. These are South Africans.'

So I always repeated what he said to me to other people and realised it had depth. Because he said to me, 'We are not fighting a people, we are fighting an unjust system. They are South Africans.'

When I was about 17, I wanted to join MK and in my mind thought I would be a good soldier. So I approached my dad and told him. And I could see the shock on his face. He thought about it for a little, and then he said to me, 'You know, you are my son, and if you were to sacrifice your life and die in the struggle, fighting for the liberation of our people, I would be very proud of you.'

Later Johnny Makhatini came to see me and said that Dad had told him that I wanted to join MK because we had left it unresolved.

I suspected he was sent to persuade me not to go. And to convince me of the reality of my soft life and the harsh conditions I would face.

He even told me as OR's son I would be expected to be the example of discipline.

I was quite annoyed about it and I expressed to my mother all of my feelings and about two weeks later I

went and applied to join the British army. And I got accepted. But they said to me that they were impressed by me, and said that I could apply to an officer's academy. And that I should reapply.

My mother found the application papers and their response and the new application papers to a place called Sandhurst.

Prior to my father's next visit, he had asked Joe Slovo to speak to me. And I told my Uncle Joe, to his horror, that I was joining the British army, because my father would not let me join MK so I decided to get the training elsewhere.

He warned me that my father would not be pleased.

Then on my father's next visit, he told me very firmly that if I had already accepted I should resign. And that I had no right to join somebody else's army. That if I wanted to join an army, I should join the People's Army.

On my mother's 60th birthday, it was really important to her that her husband attend the dinner party at Thembi's home in London.

But he was at the time busy with the Harare Declaration, and was flying around the continent, with a hectic schedule, seeing presidents, and consulting.

Nonetheless, he came via London and arrived at the dinner party to my mother's delight. It was very romantic and a beautiful evening but towards the end of it, we all noticed he was not looking well. And my mother and I, and my sister Thembi, tried to persuade him that he must stay and not leave the following morning.

It was the worst I had ever seen him look. And I told him so. And my mother reminded him that the doctors were waiting for him in East Germany, because he had a pacemaker put in years before and they needed to do check-ups and all kinds of procedures. He had also had a small stroke before.

So she said he must go directly to these doctors. Which he said he could not do then, but would do after he had completed his tours.

I pleaded with him, that, 'Dad, the revolution needs you alive and healthy, and strong, it's not selfish to look after your health.'

Either way, he was determined to

go, which he did the next morning. Within weeks, my mother received a call from the president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, to say that Dad had had a big stroke, lost speech and movement on one side, and that they were flying him in a friend's private plane to London. It was the hardest of times for my mother. And a crushing blow to all of us.

So there was a lot of trepidation about what state we would find him in once he arrived at the airport.

I accompanied my mother into this small plane, where my father was lying and she kissed him and held his hand and said, 'Don't worry Papa, I am here now. You will be ok.' And did the sign of a cross on his forehead and then just hugged him for like half an hour until they moved us off the plane and into the airport.

**“He said to her
'Don't worry, Dilly,
God will provide.'
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a temper and she
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I must provide!
And I alone.'”**

We took him to Harley Street where the two head doctors who had been assigned to look after him, told my mother and his children that, 'I am afraid the bleeding has been so severe in the brain, there is no chance your husband will walk again or talk again.'

To which my mother said, 'Oh really? Get out, you are fired!'

I tried to calm her down, but she ordered them out. And called the hospital administrator and told him to replace them.

He had the sweetest Irish nurse who was totally dedicated to him and who ensured that all the other staff were dedicated to him and took him as a father. Over the next six to nine months, he started recovery of a sort.

So the new doctor, nine months later, tells her, 'Mrs Tambo, we have

seen something we very rarely see in our profession. Your husband must be a very intelligent man. Because he has trained a whole new area of his brain to be capable of speech.'

And although his motor skills were irreparably damaged and it took time for him to transfer the thought in his mind to vocal announcement, my mother was so correct to fire those doctors who had given up on him, because I had the delight of seeing him upon his return to South Africa address the ANC conference in NASREC and a stadium of over 70,000 people.

It was not the old master of eloquence, but it was him. The Old Soldier.

The stroke robbed my mother of her dreams, of retiring with her husband and spending time with him in a free South Africa. It robbed me and my sisters of a happy return home after a lifetime in exile.

So although for me he went too early, and although I hated the coincidence of him going at the time when he was maybe needed most, I always knew he was not doing it for personal power or position, and even if he had been healthy, he would have passed the baton on to Mandela and Sisulu.

And with my mother, although her life was full of suffering and separation from her husband, their love for each other was total and she would always remind us, 'Remember, your father did not introduce me to the Struggle, I was already in it, when I met him.'

So if anything made life bearable, it was her dream of returning to a liberated South Africa.

We grew up with her, as a tight family unit, and she was one of the greatest human beings. She was my heart. And I always knew that in his absence, it was my job to look after her, in all ways.

When she went, my heart exploded.

Although a side of my sisters Thembi, Tselane and myself will never recover from the timing of our father's passing, almost a year to the day before the first democratic elections in 1994, we loved every moment of being his children, we loved every inch of his being, and we could not imagine a greater father. ■

OLIVER TAMBO

May our courage mirror his



By Tokyo Sexwale

Why would an iconic personality and celebrated global statesman like Nelson Mandela proclaim about someone else: “He is the greatest African. He is a leader amongst the best in the world. He is my greatest hero”? Madiba was referring to none other than Oliver Tambo.

Seeking an answer to this question might take one on a merry-go-round across the globe in search of an appropriately couched explanation; for it is an extremely rare phenomenon for someone of Madiba’s greatness to bend down and shower accolades upon another. After all, crass human nature in our world of lime-light hogging militates against this. In the world of the Mandelas and Tambos this is no rocket science. Yet, in day-to-day

pitiful existence there are LEADERS and leaders.

One needs not traverse the globe to discover the ultra-high esteem he had for OR. In his celebrated autobiographical epic – *Long Walk to Freedom* the story of the man himself inasmuch as it is the history of a whole people – Madiba devoted much time and a space, inter alia, to OR with several pearls littered across the pages from the beginning to the end. Here are some examples:

First Encounter with OR – a diamond-edged thinker

“One of my comrades on these expeditions (Bible teaching around villages as members of the Students Christian Association) was a serious young science scholar whom I had met on the soccer field. He came

from Pondoland, and his name was Oliver Tambo. From the start I saw that Oliver’s intelligence was diamond-edged. He was a keen debater and did not accept the platitudes that so many of us automatically subscribed to.... It was easy to see that he was destined for great things...”.

Friendship, Comradeship, Partnership

“Oliver and I were very good friends and we mainly discussed ANC business during lunch hours. He had first impressed me at the Fort Hare (University) where I noticed his thoughtful intelligence and sharp debating skills. With his cool logical style he could demolish an opponent’s argument – precisely the sort of intelligence that is useful in a courtroom. Before Fort Hare he had been a brilliant student at St. Peter’s (seminary). His

even tempered objectivity was an antidote to my more emotional reaction to issues. Oliver was deeply religious and had for a long time considered the ministry to be his calling.”

Entrusted to Lead in the Toughest of Times

“Shortly before the State of Emergency Oliver left South Africa on the instructions of the ANC. We had long suspected a clamp-down was coming, and Congress decided that certain members had to leave the country... Oliver’s departure was one of the best planned and fortunate actions ever taken by the movement... with his wisdom and calmness, his patience and organisational skills, his ability to lead and inspire without stepping on toes, Oliver was the perfect choice for this assignment...”

The Appropriate Way to fill Luthuli’s Shoes

“We learnt of Chief Luthuli’s death at home in July 1967. (His) death left a great vacuum in the organisation; the Chief was a Nobel peace prize winner, a distinguished, internationally known figure, a man who commanded respect from both black and white. For these reasons he was irreplaceable. Yet, in Oliver Tambo, who as acting president-general of the ANC, the organisation found a man who could fill the Chief’s shoes. Like Luthuli, he was articulate yet not showy, confident but humble. He too epitomised Chief Luthuli’s precept: ‘Let your courage rise with danger.’”

Selflessness, Humanity and Non-Powermongering

(Following release from prison) “After my last stop in Africa, I flew to Stockholm to visit Oliver. Seeing my old friend and law partner was the reunion I most looked forward to. Oliver was not well... when we were alone the first subject he raised was the leadership of the organisation. ‘Nelson, you must now take over as President of the ANC. I have been merely keeping the job warm for you.’ I refused, telling him that he had led the organisation in exile far better than I ever could have. It was neither fair nor democratic for a transfer to occur in such a manner... Oliver protested but I could not budge. It was a sign of his humility and selflessness that he had

wanted to appoint me president, but it was not in keeping with the principles of the ANC.”

All the above, in a small way, through Madiba’s pages, attempts to capture the essence of comrade OR Tambo. Countless people the world over, who interacted with OR over the three decades of his stewardship of the ANC in exile, attest to the uniqueness of his leadership style – particularly as an inspirational and unifying factor. History abounds with countless examples of unworthy characters whom fate thrust upon society as leaders; yet who are anything but... and long after their departure, they leave shameful monuments as the only reminders of their ignominious past. No sooner has a leader of such ilk left than people bring their disgraceful images down - even spitting on their graves.

The leadership example of OR is

“The leadership example of OR is the type that evokes great motivation, is exalting and can drive nations or individuals to extraordinary lengths for the greater good. One has never been in more awe than during one’s initial encounter with comrade OR.”

the type that evokes great motivation, is exalting and can drive nations or individuals to extraordinary lengths for the greater good. One has never been in more awe than during one’s initial encounter with comrade OR. He suddenly appeared at a non-descript transit camp, Temeke, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, in January 1975, accompanied by Moses Mabida, Mzwai Piliso and others. They had just been to Havana for the first Congress of the Cuban Communist Party. We were in our very early twenties. He joined on some rickety benches for

some god-forsaken lunch of fish and cooked bananas. With no fanfare he ‘reported’ about the Havana Congress, fraternal greetings from Castro to the oppressed people of South Africa and commitment to all-round support of the ANC-led liberation struggle.

Our questions and remarks directed at him were pitiful: Why did we not hear him speak personally on Radio Freedom to tell the masses about his peripatetic political work? Why did we not see his images on ANC pamphlets distributed underground inside the country so that people can know him? Why could the ANC not obtain more powerful radio transmitters for Radio Freedom to off-set the jamming by the Boers? Why are there no military operations and attacks right inside South Africa by MK? Why was he “still Acting President” so long after the death of Chief Luthuli? We were so eager to hear from him - this was the opportunity of a lifetime!

With his thick black rimmed spectacles like a stern school master, he initially looked a trifle absent-minded as he pondered... Then his eyes, piercing, lit up! His razor-sharp mind cut across as he steadily pin-pointed each question. Remarkably, he did not have answers to some of the questions and invited others to reply. No spin. No pomp. No know it all.

He had several questions of his own, enquiring about our health, our stay, how it was back home, which different towns we came from, the youth, and issues so mundane as cost of transport, mealie-meal, school fees and odd people he knew such as Richard Maponya, Dr Motlana and Helen Khuzwayo.

A consummate intellectual, this was a leader, in guiding an organisation as complex as the ANC, who was to spend thirty years in exile busy demonstrating keen and genuine interest in the small details of his people’s existence. Here was a leader, who having just held exchanges with the iconic Fidel Castro in Cuba, was sitting on a rickety bench with young twenty something’s reporting on those high-level exchanges with no pretence that the discussions with Fidel were “privileged information”. He was a leader, having enquired from his fellow

leaders where the “children” (us) were headed, and who having been told “the Soviet Union”, simply smiled in a fatherly manner and promised to visit our group while in military training. And a visit he did. He was in Moscow to attend the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union!

This was a father figure, who bore the brunt of ensuring that every cadre in exile, in the miserable existence of life far away from home for decades, at least had a meal or more per day, clothing and footwear – new and second hand – and a roof, no matter how low, above their heads.

Here was a man, who led his team criss-crossing the world, mobilising international solidarity, clarifying issues about our anti-apartheid struggle and campaigning to isolate racist South Africa in fora such as the Frontline States, the OAU (AU), The Arab league, the Non-aligned Movement, the Commonwealth and the United Nations Organisation. The UN, at the ANC’s behest, condemned apartheid and described it in special resolutions as a threat to world peace and a crime against humanity.

Here was a selfless leader, who steadfastly placed the name Mandela on the global agenda and directed international awards, accolades and honours towards Mandela to enhance the RELEASE MANDELA campaign which he, OR, initiated. Many leaders, during times when others are incapacitated – as Mandela and others were – take the gap and focus attention upon their own images and ages. OR’s remarkable example is self-abnegation to a fault. It also demonstrates self-confidence, a true mark of leadership.

Yet, here is a leader, who as the tallest tree knew that his fate was to absorb all the trials and tribulations of leadership in exile, including the harshness of the Morogoro Conference – the ANC’s first in exile – where he absorbed severe criticisms on behalf of all leaders for all sorts of short-comings particularly following self-backs suffered during the Wankie military operations by MK against the combined Rhodesian and South African security forces. Yet his resolve post-Morogoro did not diminish. Many years later he heroically guided the ANC safely back home,

with one hand, having lost the use of his right arm to a killer stroke... the result of shouldering the heavy burden of a complicated and not-easy-to lead organisation like the ANC.

It is possible to continue endlessly detailing the heroism of Oliver Reginald Tambo. Yet it is often remarked that the most edifying comments on the qualities of leaders emanate from their serious opponents and enemies. In this respect it is more revealing to learn of the view about OR from one of his erstwhile opponents – and former US Secretary of State under US Republican President Reagan: George Schultz.

“Schultz has now admitted that OR was a brilliant and formidable opponent, a gentleman, a leader whose grasp of world affairs and US policy was remarkable. Some in Schulz’s delegation conceded that in the presence of Tambo they felt like pupils listening to a knowledgeable principal who was articulate, soft spoken but firm.”

As the ANC international campaign was escalating and US government’s excuses were crumbling due to pressure by good Americans who abhorred Apartheid, the US policy of refusing to deal with the ANC because it was classified as a terrorist organisation was collapsing. Consequently Schultz on behalf of Reagan became the one saddled with having to meet OR, face-to-face.

In line with the US strategy at that time, Schultz subsequently played own this critical meeting and said that he was not deeply impressed by OR. Years later, the truth emerged

that not only was this a watershed encounter in US-ANC relations, but it also led to a marked shift in US foreign policy towards Africa. Schultz has now admitted that OR was a brilliant and formidable opponent, a gentleman, a leader whose grasp of world affairs and US policy was remarkable. Some in Schulz’s delegation conceded that in the presence of Tambo they felt like pupils listening to a knowledgeable principal who was articulate, soft spoken but firm.

Their CIA-prepared briefing of an angry machete-wielding African leader, with bandoliers and grenades, followed by hungry machine-gun toting child soldiers ready to rape and set villages alight, was shattered. Face to face with OR, their view of a future President of a ravished state, ready to fill his pockets and off-shore accounts with ill-gotten loot from low public coffers was demolished.

Instead, in Tambo they found a passionate, honest and committed non-racial democrat, a thinker of great magnitude; and a skilful strategist. Over thirty years Tambo outlived several American presidents and during this period he inspired some of them to look at the world differently – not with US imperialist eyes but through US democratic ones.

To conclude, It is advisable to return to Madiba on Tambo, for few people know OR as intimately, personally and in the revolutionary struggle as Madiba – from childhood to the end. Following OR’s demise, Madiba, in *Long Walk to Freedom* pens the following lines:

“Exactly two weeks later (after the assassination of Chris Hani) there was another significant passing. This one did not shake the nation as Chris’s had, but it shook me... In Plato’s allegory of the metals the philosopher classifies men into groups of gold, silver and lead. Oliver was pure gold. He was gold in his intellectual brilliance; gold in his warmth and humanity; gold in his tolerance and generosity, gold in his unflinching loyalty and self-sacrifice. As much as I respected him as a leader, that is how much I loved him as a man... I felt so bereft when he died... like the loneliest man in the world... when I looked at him in his coffin it was as if part of myself had died.” ■

OR TAMBO

A patron of Arts and Culture

I often think about OR. I see his face. I see his smile. I see his stern gaze. And now and then, when it is really hard, I wonder what he would say.

By Mongane Wally Serote

Even as he said nothing it was as if he was engulfed by integrity. But also there was this deep aura which surrounded his being, an integrity which one could touch. Once, when a journalist asked me why as a writer I was an ANC cadre, I said because the ANC is a humane

organisation. I then also said, that is because it is led by OR, a very humane person. Afterwards, I asked myself, how do I know all of these things I was saying? Why was I so sure? People did not only respect OR, OR was most loved by people within and outside of the ANC. However, that does not

answer the questions I have just asked, nor does it mean that he was loved by all people: Margaret Thatcher called him a terrorist.

Let me speak about him. Something in OR, whenever I met him, told me that I must find a way to respect the people, and that meant everyone,

especially because our responsibility in the forward areas such as Botswana was to meet and talk to people. I wanted to listen to people, the way OR listened to people; I wanted to ask questions, the way OR asked questions; I wanted to care about people the way he cared about them. I experienced all of these feelings and emotions whenever I met him, in Lusaka, in London and in Johannesburg after he came back to South Africa. I frequented his office at Shell House, which was opposite Comrade Sisulu's office.

OR phoned me once, and when I picked up the phone I heard: "Are you OK, Wallace, can you come to my office?" I can never ever explain the joy, the anxiety, almost a need to pick everything up about me and be perfect, whenever I had to meet him. After every meeting I felt a great joy from having been in his presence because I always would have learnt something from him. One of those things is consultation, another is inclusivity; and also a deep desire to find consensus in any discussion I had with people. I almost always could visualise the meaning of "Unity of our people" because I could always hear how he pronounced the words and how he said it.

So, When OR said, "Arts and Culture has the potential to unite our people" in my very first meeting with him, he ignited a force in me, which no one could stop. There are still people in the ANC who do not know that Arts and Culture can unite our people. OR had a given me a secret: Arts and Culture can unite our people. What is Arts, what is Culture? I kept asking.

In July 1982 the Culture and Resistance festival and symposium of the Arts, held in Gaborone, Botswana, was one of the largest non-racial, non-partisan arts and culture gatherings. Here South African musicians, painters, photographers, dancers, writers, filmmakers, actors, and theatre people converged and declared that Arts and Culture is a weapon of the Liberation Struggle. Hundreds of cultural workers gathered: reading poetry, exhibiting photographs and paintings, staging theatre productions; musicians performed, dancers danced and displayed the body as an

“I wanted to listen to people, the way OR listened to people; I wanted to ask questions, the way OR asked questions; I wanted to care about people the way he cared about them.”

expression of thought and emotion and South African films were screened. It had taken 2 years to organise this mammoth event and the brief which we had formulated in the underground was: How can we, through the arts, make the aspirations of our people walk the streets?" If you walked the photographic exhibition route you saw that the lenses of cameras, for the first time, faced the barrels of the police guns – which are what the oppressed faced in our country in those days. In the symposium there were discussions: What is culture? What is the role of culture, what are the arts, what is their role and what is the role of cultural workers in the liberation struggle? We said whatever we said and we did what we could to be informed by the aspirations of the struggling people in our country, who spared nothing to gain their freedom.

It was comrade Lindiwe Mabuza who brought one of the best messages I had ever heard in my life: OR had endorsed the suggestion that the ANC must have a Department of Arts and Culture. That was at the end of 1982. Those were the Lusaka days.

In London, three or so years after the ground-breaking conference called 'Culture in Another South Africa', held

“We focused on transformation and redress. This was both in the institutions themselves and in Codesa.”

in Amsterdam in 1987, we organised another called 'Zabalaza'. 'Culture in Another South Africa' had focused on formulating non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic cultural policy for the new South Africa. 'Zabalaza' in London had as its objective that the cultural workers of South Africa, in all their hues, should gather expertise and return to South Africa to strengthen democratic arts and culture through the myriad of arts and culture structures which had been formed since 1978.

We held numerous consultation meetings with OR when he was recuperating at his home after he suffered a stroke. The love with which those who came from "inside" the country embraced, hugged and kissed OR – who was limping and whose right arm was almost non-functional – brought warmth from him. He was firm with himself in the meetings, by listening, by asking questions and by giving carefully formulated responses to the many questions which were fielded, even as he looked extremely tired. The "insiders" came from all over South Africa, and OR followed the briefings in detail. At the end, OR painstakingly, slowly, autographed each of the books which Ma Tambo gave to the insiders. The book was called *Oliver Tambo Speaks*. OR was using his left hand to autograph the books, of which there were many.

Then there was the Culture and Development conference which was held in 1993, this time in Johannesburg, South Africa. We were then focusing on the transformation of Arts and Culture institutions, and forming redress mechanisms for disadvantaged creative people. We had fielded different task groups based on art forms. Fortunately, some of us had already heard Oom Gov say: *"The opponents to progress are not doves, who, when you clap your hands, they fly away; they will fight you."* Given the history of struggle, and given how in the nineties there was so much promise for a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa, one would have thought that the same euphoria which had caught all of us, in our diversity, would influence all of us to find a way and to sustain that way for the way forward. And so, we

engaged the white only institutions, we came with an agenda for change.

As I mentioned before, OR phoned me and called me to come and see him. He gave me a large file, and told me that he had held negotiations with an Afrikaans filmmaker, Elmo de Wet, who was a top apartheid filmmaker, who now wanted to work with the ANC. The file had contained some of the agreements he had reached with this man. He told me that the Department of Arts and Culture, which I was heading, must take the process forward. As I was walking out of his office, he was smiling, and he said something like, *be careful, be careful*. I left the office, having noted his mischievous smile, but hardly understanding it.

We engaged, and set in motion a process to establish a national film organisation. We involved the majority of filmmakers in the country. We also engaged what was then called the Transvaal Performing Arts Council, so also Performing Council in the Free State, the Play House in Natal, Opera House in PE and many other institutions. We made it a point to brief OR, and seek advice from him as these processes unfolded.

We focused on transformation and redress. This was both in the institutions themselves and in Codesa. Once, as we were briefing OR and Comrade Sisulu, in OR's office at Shell House, about how we were formulating the language policy to include all the nine African languages, they began to remind each other about how they had formulated that policy. They had done so, in 1943, a year before I was born. They reminded each other that in fact, Comrade Walter was working with Peter Raboroko on the policy and that they had published it in one of the publications which the Movement had founded. It was most interesting to hear them call each other by first name: "Walter..." this and "Reginald that..." peers in conversation. But it was not only that they were peers, it was also a deep camaraderie, based on and informed by many past common experiences which engulfed their very being. They were, one could understand, experiences tempered in

“Once, as we were briefing OR and Comrade Sisulu, in OR's office at Shell House, about how we were formulating the language policy to include all the nine African languages, they began to remind each other about how they had formulated that policy.”

struggle, but also, such a protracted struggle! One caught on to this as they reminded each other about issues, circumstances and all kinds of matters they were involved in.

That April 1993 came with devastating moments for the ANC. First, Chris Hani was murdered. It is correct to say that it was at that moment that the ANC and Nelson Mandela took over, and gave direction to South Africa. There had been Boipatong in 1992, where a massacre of innocent people had taken place, sending cold, very cold, shudders through the life of the nation. Comrade Chris was murdered on 10 April, and Comrade OR passed on April 24.

We held the conference. We had hoped that OR will be present. That he did not attend, and that both his comrades, Madiba and Sisulu attended, made many of us search

“One would have thought that the same euphoria which had caught all of us, in our diversity, would influence all of us to find a way and to sustain that way for the way forward.”

for meaning and for possible ways to come to terms with the contradiction which stared at us. It would have been a historic moment to be with the three of them on that stage, as South Africans expressed the diverse culture of our country through all the art forms. Sisulu spoke and Madiba spoke. We received what they said with great enthusiasm, but also, with utter sadness. It was a moment of great change, and it was a moment of a beginning.

One day, the *Mail and Guardian*, in its front page, published in an article that I had forged OR's signature and that I had embezzled funds. This was a very serious accusation. I walked the corridors of Shell House, I am certain, in self-pity, but also wanting to know what one does when a newspaper writes such a blatant lie. I went to our Department of Information and Propaganda: nothing. Legal Department: nothing. I met Comrade Nkobi, then the Treasure General of our Movement, I told him the story. He held my hand; we walked out of his office. He said, *We trained you in many ways; you must not be a sissy: find a way to fight*. I discussed this matter with Gab, who was OR's assistant. Nkobi and Gab armed me: if my comrades understood and knew the truth, nothing really mattered. I remembered Oom Gov's doves, and OR's mischievous smile, I could only smile at all of this myself.

The Department of Arts and Culture and Science and Technology was founded in our country. Because our country is free, because we are a democratic country, the arts flourish. We have heard and seen and experienced all kinds of things about us, the people of South Africa, from the arts which are anchored in freedom, even as the media forever flaunts Europe and America in our faces as if to say, here are the only arts in the world. Europe and America have made major strides and contributions to the arts. Our young democracy and our arts will find its base among South Africans.

I often think about OR. I see his face. I see his smile. I see his stern gaze. And now and then, when it is really hard, I wonder what he would say. ■

Oliver Tambo and the challenges of the ANC's military camps



Oliver Tambo was able to maintain the admiration and respect required of a leader whose central task was to sustain the unity of purpose of the liberation movement and to pursue the struggle, relentlessly, both at home and internationally.

By Gregory Houston

There is a perception among many in the liberation movement that the late President-General of the African National Congress (ANC), Oliver Reginald 'OR' Tambo, has not been given sufficient recognition for the role he played in the liberation struggle. They credit Tambo above all else with the role he played in holding the movement together under

the extremely difficult conditions of 30 years of exile. In large part, many people see his leadership style as being the main factor behind the relative success he had in maintaining cohesion within the movement.

One of the most important ways to examine the leadership style of an individual is to look at the relationship with the rank-and-file members of the

movement. It is for this reason that I chose to explore Tambo's relationship with the ordinary members of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in the military camps abroad. The focus is on three distinct situations or episodes: the MK camp at Kongwa in Tanzania; the 'Hani Memorandum'; and the 1983/84 mutinies in the MK camps in Angola.

Tanzania

The starting point is the period immediately before the turn to armed struggle in the early 1960s. Oliver Tambo, then Deputy President of the African National Congress, was sent out of the country in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960 to establish contacts for the ANC abroad and to promote international support for the ANC's cause. However, the banning of the liberation movements in April of that year, the wave of repression that followed, the life sentences meted out to several prominent leaders of the ANC, and the wave of arrests after the Rivonia trial decimated the leadership of the movement inside the country. In 1965, a decision was taken to transfer leadership of the movement to Oliver Tambo and others in exile. Thus, by the middle of the 1960s the tasks of the exiled leadership had been dramatically expanded to include, among other things, providing training to young recruits of the ANC's military wing, and waging the liberation struggle.

During the early 1960s, large numbers of young men and a smaller number of women were forced into exile. Once they took this decision, they had to be taken to the ANC offices in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where they were met by the ANC leadership in exile. It is this first meeting with the leadership that provides one significant insight into OR's style of leadership. Chris Hani recalls such an episode in the following terms:

We were received by him. We were addressed by him. We were inspired by him. Sort of quite convincing style of OR. He comes to see us whenever he had time and to discuss with us, and to listen to us. To listen to our own experiences; what we thought were insignificant experiences. We never thought they were important. But Tambo would come and listen to those experiences¹.

New recruits arriving in Dar es Salaam at the time were given the opportunity to join the military wing or opt for further education. Most chose to join MK. Hundreds of cadres were sent from Dar es Salaam to Morocco, Egypt, the Soviet Union, China and

Czechoslovakia. Tambo would address each group that was on its way for training. On their return OR would once again meet with them. Chris recalls that:

For Tambo, our well-being was always important. Not well-being in terms of getting our food every day. But Tambo wanted us to feel an important part of the organisation. We were ordinary cadres. We were not important names. But Tambo paid this attention to us regularly. Visiting us, asking us about our experiences in the Soviet Union, about our courses, and also briefing us on what was happening during our absence in the country: the Rivonia arrests, the conviction of our leaders, the need for us to go back to

“ The MK group that was charged with developing the camp started from scratch, collecting supplies, organising services, and sleeping in tents for a few years.”

help rebuild the organisation².

Simon Senna recalls that when his group returned from training in the Soviet Union, Tambo cried when he met them. ‘Seeing the type of army of the future South Africa which he was part of building, he cried. He was so happy and excited and pleased³.

In 1965, the ANC established its main military camp in Kongwa, Tanzania. By the end of the year the number of cadres based at the camp had grown to 500. There were a number of difficulties cadres faced with the establishment of the camp: shortages of food, clothes, medicines, doctors, and proper accommodation. The ANC had very limited resources, and very little support was forthcoming from other countries. Kongwa was a dry, hot and dusty place plagued with disease. It was near a small village, and the camp had to be prepared for the arrival of the large number of cadres who had been training at Odessa⁴. The only building was an

abandoned dilapidated railway station. The MK group that was charged with developing the camp started from scratch, collecting supplies, organising services, and sleeping in tents for a few years. They dug trenches and chopped down trees, and eventually developed a huge vegetable garden after laying water pipes to obtain water from a source about 10 kilometres from the camp⁵.

Initially, morale was high in the camp, and the highly trained and well equipped cadres were eager to take on the apartheid security forces. However, some cadres who lived at the camp equated life at Kongwa to imprisonment. They draw attention to the difficulties the camp leadership had in obtaining food for the cadres, and the fact that the only clothes they had were combat clothes. There were very few women in the camp, as well as in the nearby village. Most of the women they came into contact with were prostitutes⁶.

The most serious problem the ANC faced in the camps at the time, however, was that ‘people wanted to go home, and they just did not want to sit in Kongwa’. There was also a perception that the leadership was not doing enough to find a way home for the cadres – that they were busy ‘living it up’ in Dar es Salaam⁷. At one point, after their hopes had been dashed several times, a group of cadres from Natal stole a military truck from the camp and drove to the ANC headquarters in Morogoro to discuss their grievances with the leadership. The group was arrested by Tanzanian soldiers, and some ANC leaders wanted them to be punished as deserters. But OR was among those who opposed sanctioning them in any way. He was one of the leaders who regularly visited the camps, and he understood the frustrations they were facing because he listened to them.

At the outset of the Wankie Campaign, OR demonstrated another key characteristic of his style of leadership: to undergo some of the experiences of the rank and file members of the movement. He joined the MK cadres who had been selected for the mission just prior to their departure, and slept with them in the

bush near the crossing point. According to Chris Hani:

We spent a few days on the banks of the Zambezi River, about two kilometres from the river and Tambo stayed with us, slept there with us, in the open, not even in tents. We were just sleeping in the bush. And this convinced us again of the type of leader that Tambo was. A practical leader, an exemplary leader, and one who was prepared to share the hardness of this very difficult and demanding task with his soldiers⁸.

Justice Mpanza recalls that they used a rope to get to the bank of the Zambezi River. He adds that: 'the person who gave us a lot of encouragement was Tambo. Tambo was the first person to cross using the rope, and he was in front of Modise. He went down the terrain and waited for us below – to lead us to our boat.' Tambo and Modise remained on the Zambian side of the river until all the cadres had crossed safely⁹.

The Hani Memorandum

However, it was in the wake of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns that the leadership was to face one of its most serious threats. This arose as a consequence of the so-called 'Hani Memorandum', in which seven MK cadres criticised the leadership. Among the key charges was that the ANC leadership had become so comfortable in exile that it was not doing anything to conduct the struggle. The cadres had also complained that the ANC and MK leadership was not doing enough to escalate the struggle at home, which appeared to be a personal attack on Tambo. A Military Tribunal suspended the seven from the ANC on the 25th of March 1969. The majority of members of the tribunal which considered punishment of the seven signatories were in favour of the death penalty, but it was Mzwai Piliso, and subsequently OR, who opposed this and instead recommended their expulsion. They were subsequently given amnesty and re-instated at the insistence of OR and other leaders.

The Hani Memorandum and the events immediately following created a rift between Joe Modise, MK commander-in-chief, and Chris Hani. Luli Callinicos notes that by 1972 the

“He was one of the leaders who regularly visited the camps, and he understood the frustrations they were facing because he listened to them.”

tensions between supporters of the two had still not been resolved. Hani's supporters were mainly from the Cape, and appeared to be unwilling to accept the authority of Modise¹⁰.

On the other hand, the so-called 'Transvaal group', supporters of Joe Modise, were angry that Hani and others had been re-instated and that Chris had been promoted to the political commissariat. They saw the latter arising from pressure put on the leadership by cadres from the Cape, and in a meeting with Tambo and the Revolutionary Council in mid-1969 accused Tambo of also practising tribalism by promoting Chris. One commentator states that: 'During this meeting, Tambo demonstrated his talent as a listener and his ability to take criticism aimed at himself'¹¹.

Although Chris Hani and other cadres who had been promoted volunteered to step down from their position, there were a number of serious acts of ill-discipline carried out by MK cadres based in Lusaka at the time. In July 1969, the Zambian government insisted that the ANC remove its MK cadres to Tanzania, which was soon

“Tambo felt that he had to experience camp life to better appreciate and understand the issues the cadres were facing. This was something he was to do again and again.”

changed to confining them to a bush camp to the east of Lusaka¹². MK cadre Isaac Makopo recalls that:

For a start then, everybody was ordered out of town and back to the Bush, a few miles out of Lusaka, on your way to Malawi. Then OR Tambo says: "I'm going to operate from here, going to be with the people in the camp, in the tents, in the Bush." The area was actually a game reserve. He would go to Lusaka only when he needed to – for example, on some diplomatic mission to meet some government officials¹³.

In this respect, Tambo felt that he had to experience camp life to better appreciate and understand the issues the cadres were facing. This was something he was to do again and again.

The 1983/84 Mutinies in Angola

Another serious challenge to the ANC as a whole emanating from the military camps occurred in 1983 and 1984 in Angola. The influx of thousands of recruits during and immediately after the Soweto uprising also saw an alarming infiltration of apartheid state agents. After joining MK, they were distributed to ANC camps that were established in Angola from late 1976 onwards. Such agents were suspected of poisoning 500 cadres at the Novo Catengue camp in Angola in September 1977. Two years later, in 1979, the South African Air Force attacked the camp, and it was suspected that state agents in the camp had provided the enemy with information about its location¹⁴. The ANC's Security Department eventually uncovered about 20 agents, some holding senior positions in various departments of the ANC and entrusted with sensitive information. Agents in the military camps were instructed to stir up discontent by drawing attention to the harsh elements of life in the camps and the failure of the ANC to deploy many of its trained cadres to infiltrate South Africa¹⁵.

The first mutiny occurred in 1983, when a group of cadres demanded to be sent back home to engage with the enemy. When permission to do so was not forthcoming, they refused to be disarmed and fired shots into the air. The mutiny was resolved peacefully. However, this was followed

by a growing number of incidents of indiscipline, such as pilfering or sabotaging of supplies, smoking dagga, rape and murder in the camps and neighbouring villages¹⁶.

Meanwhile, the ANC had agreed to a request by the Angolan authorities to provide assistance in its war with the UNITA rebels. Cadres from MK were deployed, and participated in mine-defusing, laying ambushes and patrolling duties. Subsequently, MK was called upon to participate in attacks on the UNITA stronghold¹⁷. Groups of MK cadres were subsequently dispersed among FAPLA (armed wing of MPLA) units in the area. The Angolans subsequently made a request for more MK cadres to be deployed against UNITA, and an additional 104 cadres were sent to the area. Discipline soon broke down in the camp set up by these cadres, and at the camp of Mustafa where other MK cadres were based. This led to the recall of about 60 cadres, who were sent to Viana camp in Luanda. This group was followed by another 40 who returned to Viana without permission. Both groups refused to surrender their arms when they arrived at the camp, as was customary, and order rapidly declined in the camp¹⁸.

In February 1984, a committee was sent to Viana by MK's Military Headquarters to resolve the problems. Chris Hani was a member of this committee, and he went into the camp unarmed to speak to the mutineers. He persuaded them to lay down their arms and to attend a meeting to discuss their problems¹⁹. The cadres elected a 'Committee of Ten' to hold discussions with the military committee. However, on the day scheduled for a meeting between the two committees a FAPLA unit entered the camp with the intention of disarming the MK cadres. A confrontation followed, and three people were killed. The members of the Committee of Ten and a number of other cadres were arrested²⁰.

Another mutiny broke out at Pango camp, where the mutineers used machine guns and heavy weapons. The camp commanders and several other cadres were killed²¹. An MK unit led by Timothy Mokoena attacked the camp and took it over. Order was restored,

and the mutineers were arrested and sent to Camp 32²². Chris Hani and Gertrude Shope were subsequently dispatched by OR to Camp 32 where some of the cadres who had been arrested for mutiny were incarcerated. They found conditions in the camp to be terrible, and immediately demanded that changes be instituted²³.

In part, while very little blame was placed directly on Tambo for these events, his cautious way of dealing with matters was regarded by some as part of the problem. One cadre characterised OR's decision-making process as follows: 'It doesn't matter how contentious a question is, we are not going to take a decision by vote.

“Liberation movements in exile experience a host of problems, which, if not managed properly, have the potential to result in implosion. This places a number of demands on the leadership of the organisation, particularly in moments where there is dissatisfaction with the leadership itself among the rank-and-file members of the organisation.”

We must reach a consensus. That became our tradition. That was the character of our movement under the leadership of that man, uNdima²⁴. But it was Tambo who took the initiative and led the process to institute changes that would make life easier for MK cadres in many respects.

Conclusion

Liberation movements in exile experience a host of problems, which,

if not managed properly, have the potential to result in implosion. This places a number of demands on the leadership of the organisation, particularly in moments where there is dissatisfaction with the leadership itself among the rank-and-file members of the organisation. From the outset, the ANC in exile was inadequately prepared for the task of accommodating and providing training to the influx of guerrillas in the early 1960s. Nor were the conditions suitable for it to wage a guerrilla war, based as it was thousands of kilometres from the South African border. However, both in his early contacts with new recruits, and with trained guerrillas in the camps thereafter, Oliver Tambo was able to maintain the admiration and respect required of a leader whose central task was to sustain the unity of purpose of the liberation movement and to pursue the struggle, relentlessly, both at home and internationally. ■

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Can Museums play a leading role in social change?



Museums are able to act as agents of change and offer programmes that contribute to the holistic development of people; view people as emotional, social and cognitive beings; and improve their life chances.

By Wayne Alexander

“It is appropriate that we pay tribute to OR Tambo – a struggle hero and people’s champion – at the Iziko Slave Lodge. Once a space associated with inequalities – a building with a complex and often painful history, today it is a space connecting us to our past, raising awareness of issues of human rights, equality and

justice,” says Iziko Museums of South Africa CEO, Rooksana Omar.

In 1994, the democratically elected government in South Africa inherited a divided and unequal system of governance. Under apartheid, the education system played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality and imbalances based on the notion of

separateness. The apartheid philosophy underpinned all institutions and the museums in South Africa did not escape the political nature of the time, with separate legislation governing the different museums.

However, with the ushering in of democracy in 1994, there has been a plethora of policies on education, heritage and museums, repealing all divisive and discriminatory laws that existed under apartheid, moving towards inclusive, non-discriminatory policies.

These policies were informed by the intellectual heritage of political leaders such as OR Tambo who orchestrated many programmes of action and resistance campaigns against discriminatory and oppressive practices of the Apartheid government. So, in keeping with our democratic government’s transformative imperatives, the social, economic, cultural and educational context of the 21st Century clearly demands new ways of thinking about the arts, culture, heritage and museum sector.

This thinking is aimed at involving people as active and reflective participants in society. In this regard, museums should engage the broad community and serve a diverse audience. They should employ a diversity of perspectives when dealing with objects, collections and exhibitions while using a variety of learning and teaching strategies and techniques. The varied approaches will not only enhance learning and promote a spirit of enquiry but allow for self-interpretation and meaning making, critical to change and growth.

The discussion is located within the context of socio-political-cultural change in South Africa, a shift from the apartheid past where separateness was promoted and inequalities reinforced by institutions such as schools and museums. Museums are sites of learning – sites for social reconstruction yet also potentially sites for the reproduction/reinforcement of broader social imbalances and inequalities.

Museums, which exist within the broad context of local, national and international development, should be mindful of their responsibilities as agents for social change and aware

of contemporary issues that confront society. They have to engage the public on multiple levels as well as complex issues.

So if museums are serious about transforming, they should reflect on their practice and work to create an environment where all visitors feel included and empowered in the process of learning. They should be critically aware of all the factors that either include or exclude people from the broader museum experience.

Memory and reflection: from inhumanity to humanity: the ongoing story

As I started writing this article, my mind went off on a journey, taking me back to over 30 years in time when I was at high school and at university. It was during those years that I heard about Oliver Tambo.

I remembered the different meetings that took place, which included the history society, the debating team, and many more. We used the space to talk about change inspired by leaders such as Tambo, Mandela, Biko, many writers and by organisations such as the ANC, PAC, New Unity Movement, civic organisations, the South African Council on Sport, and many other anti-apartheid and cultural organisations.

These discussions informed our actions at the time. I recalled how we walked with stones and placards in our hands, sang freedom songs underscored by the Freedom Charter to which Tambo contributed, dodged the teargas, were sprayed with the purple spray, shot at with rubber bullets, arrested, killed, maimed - all in the quest for freedom and justice.

Yes, through our collective actions led by people such as Tambo, today we are able to walk with books in our hands, sing songs, run with the Olympic torch through our city, blow the vuvuzela – and shout, proudly South African. Are we, do we? Will we be able to celebrate our 20 years of democracy in 2014 in the spirit as espoused by Tambo? Tambo was mindful of the rights of people and utterly against abuse, and insisted on the maintenance of a moral high ground. Currently, the abuse of power by some in the public and private

sector remains a challenge for our democracy, marked with issues such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, violence against women and children and drug abuse.

The '70s and '80s in our South African history are well documented and I feel so privileged to have been part of that period. It was a period where we, as pupils and students, used our collective voice to denounce the unfair and unjust practices of Apartheid and heeded the call by Tambo to make the Apartheid system unworkable and the country ungovernable. This meant denouncing a system of inhumanity in favour of a system of humanity.

The tenets of our South African constitution and other legislation and policy offer the basis for challenging inequalities and creating a better society. However, we are still grappling with the apartheid legacy of separateness and inequality. While there may be a willingness to respond to the requisite changes qualitatively, institutional challenges such as resources (financial and human), remain barriers. However, while the notion of social justice may be imbedded in the broad goals of our South African Constitution, research has shown that assimilation into the values and practices of the “white” culture remain the dominant practice.

However, in the context of South Africa, working and teaching across race and culture has created the space for intercultural dialogue and development, challenging the barriers created by apartheid.

Can museums be part of a humanising strategy? Yes they have the potential to connect everyday lives to issues, to encourage critically thinking about issues, to reveal connections between self and society, to examine and challenge structural forces that inhibit humanisation (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; Schugurensky, 2011). By using our varied collections, objects, exhibitions and education programmes we are able to create the space for people to make meaning and give expression to their feelings within the broader context of society. We have new heritage legislation, marked by elements of inclusion and transparency which assist us to resist approaches

that strip people from their cultural resources. However, transformational approaches in this field are often limited by traditional museum practice, language and resources.

My own research has shown that while there is an attempt to deal with diversity, it is a rather superficial and uncritical of the diverse cultures, language and history that make up our humanity; and in so doing it can deny people their humanity. I purport that museums acting as agents of change have the capacity to promote the worth of human beings. Education programmes in particular should be able to give expression to knowledge, skills and values for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in a society characterised by inequalities such as injustice, exploitation, discrimination and oppression. As reflective practitioners we should ask: Do we offer programmes that challenge the societal structures and systems responsible for reproducing inequalities?

Drawing on Freire (1984), one is reminded that the process of becoming more fully human as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons who participate in and with the world should underpin the institutional development processes of museums. To become more fully human, men and women must become conscious of their presence in the world as a way to individually and collectively re-envision their social world (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010; Freire & Betto, 1985; Schapiro, 2001). This conscientisation process involves using the “dialogical space”, critically reflecting on the notion of traditional and sometimes oppressive practice in museums; and moving towards Freire’s philosophy of humanisation, liberation, hope, and transformation marked by the authentic liberation of the oppressed; thus, “to transform the world is to humanise it” (Freire, 1985).

Reflecting on my own practice at Iziko Museums of South Africa, one is reminded that while we intend to foster a process of problem-posing education where learners/students/visitors/participants enter into a dialogue with presenters, curators and educators, we need to be consistent

in terms of the dialogic space aimed at creating consciousness and raising awareness. This “dialogical space” according to Freire is about “learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality. These elements include poverty, illiteracy, access to resources, discrimination and imbalances.

Museums are able to act as agents of change and offer programmes that contribute to the holistic development of people; view people as emotional, social and cognitive beings; and improve their life chances. Our programmes should provide students with opportunities to identify problems of social justice that are relevant to their lives, trigger self-transformation, and situate people as co-creators of transformative social change (Cammarota and Romero, 2006). Such an approach challenges surface-level approaches to dealing with diversity and places the humanity of those who are marginalised at the heart of social justice. Freire suggests that developing critical consciousness and engaging in transformative dialogue requires seeing people as “subjects,” rather than “objects,” thereby creating reciprocity of teaching and learning. In Freire’s words, “All educational practice requires the existence of ‘subjects,’ who while teaching, learn.

Tambo with Sisulu, Mandela and many others saw the importance of reading, discussions and debate regarding change. We need to continue such dialogues and museums offer that dialogic space.

Museums: playing a leading role

So it is against this socio-political backdrop that I pose the question: Can museums play a leading role in social change?

In the 21st century, museums cannot stand aloof from topical issues that confront society – as part of the collective leadership museums cannot be out of touch with the feelings of society; museums should be leaders in the notion of “critical” debates and work towards connecting people. The thinking is aimed at the creation of a just and healthy living society which fosters sound human relationships.

South Africans have great difficulty in understanding each other and race, class, language and religion get in the way of us living together as human beings. We need to talk, show respect, and embrace diversity and trust to overcome our fear and culture of distrust. Remember that when we have trust we have hope in humanity. So, drawing on Tambo’s values, we should be mindful that through dialogues and collective voices we must try to ensure that our legitimate and democratic government, representing the moral authority and will of our people, rules with integrity.

The humanising approach is intertwined with social change; it challenges people to critically engage with the world so they can act on it (Giroux, 2010). For example, programmes that are focused on social justice issues can develop peoples’ consciousness of issues related to power, classism, sexism, racism, heterosexism, and ableism and provoke students to engage in project-based learning that challenges oppression (Adams, Lee, & Griffin, 2010). Additionally, through service learning projects that focus on social justice issues, people are able to differentiate between social service and social change (Warren, 1998).

Museums can offer space for critical dialogue and play not only a social role but also act as a resource in local, national and international arenas. Embracing diversity has become critical but the recognition of difference has precipitated political conflict. The contentious terrain of “difference” offers sites such as museums the opportunity to create a platform to engage in the struggles for social justice in relation to the distribution of resources such as finance, welfare, environment, health, education and housing. We are often reminded that the vast majority of South African survive on social grants, and half of our citizens are hungry, struggling to put food on their table to feed their children each night. Hunger impacts on learning in South Africa.

Drawing on the “servant leadership qualities” illuminated in the Oliver Tambo Exhibition – a story which Iziko has identified to tell – we are reminded that we should always listen

to the voices of the people. Places like museums must try to understand what communities want in these public spaces and strive to contribute to the transformative process of developing social cohesion in South Africa. Through this exhibition, we want to stimulate visitors to ask questions, to leave the museum feeling troubled about certain narratives and to open up new ways of seeing as we journey within our democracy. The Tambo collection on display at Iziko Museums of South Africa was not found but identified as a story that Iziko wish to portray – adding to Iziko’s willingness and obligation to tell stories that inspire, empower and contribute to improving the life chances of all people in South Africa, underscored by the values – as presented by Tambo – of democracy, diversity, respect and social justice.

The Tambo exhibition enables us to recreate, reinterpret, remember and use our collective thoughts to reassess the meaning of the present and past in terms of the social, cultural and political needs of our country. Celebrating and commemorating our heritage and history is one way of building collective memory and consciousness.

So returning to my personal recall of my youth days as presented earlier – although I would wish to deny my aging process – I’m comforted by the idea that while our biological age marches on relentlessly – that we can’t change – we have our personal and collective memory influenced by so many great leaders such as Tambo as a source of inspiration. We are encouraged to continue through our personal, collective and institutional actions – to always strive for a just, non-discriminatory country, free from oppression amidst all the current challenges within our democracy.

For museums within a South African context to remain relevant, they must take cognisance not only of the local cultural diversity but also the wide array of knowledge that marks the diversity of our humanity.

After all, as echoed by Tambo:

“It is our responsibility to break down barriers of division and create a country where there will be neither Whites nor Blacks, just South Africans, free and united in diversity.” ■



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Weapons infiltration by the Transvaal urban machinery



If Toyota had seen the design, they would have adopted it for their later models. The handy plastic tool-kit to keep the screw drivers and screws to remove the board and replace it was elegantly attached on a clamp alongside the other impressively arrayed accessories.

By Siphwe Nyanda

The prosecution of armed struggle in our country was always going to be challenging and different from many of the successful struggles conducted before, from whose experiences we hoped to learn. There were no Sierra Maestras as existed in Cuba, which Fidel Castro and his band of guerillas were able to use to consolidate the rear bases as launching pads for forays into the interior of Cuba bearing arms; there were no impenetrable dark forests as the Mayombe in Angola from where the MPLA fighters began to strike at the Portuguese colonial army and

push further South; there were no dependable and reliable rear bases as North Vietnam provided for the armed struggle which President Ho Chi Min led for the defence of North Vietnam and the liberation of South Vietnam; nor was there the possibility of the combination of conventional and non-conventional warfare that Vo Nguyen Giap conducted with such ruthless efficiency and aplomb to defeat both France and the United States, as well as the Portuguese earlier.

When Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) was launched on 16 December 1961, the contiguous states of Rhodesia under

Ian Smith, and Mozambique under Portuguese colonialism were hostile to the ANC and were themselves facing resistance from the colonised masses whose interests were the same as those of the oppressed people of South Africa led by the ANC. Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho could only offer some political support and did not dare to provide real opportunities for MK to operate from their territories: South Africa was too strong militarily for them to even consider such adventures. South West Africa (Namibia) was virtually the fifth province of South Africa. Angola was under Portuguese

rule.

The launch of the armed struggle was therefore an audacious undertaking against great odds agreed upon by Nelson Mandela and the founders of MK. There was always going to be a great reliance on a strong internal political underground network to support the armed struggle. This internal leadership was also going to rely on the work of the leadership that the ANC sent abroad under the leadership of Oliver Tambo to mobilise international support and train MK cadres in exile for infiltration back into South Africa to join an existing political support network in both the urban and rural areas.

As if these odds were not enough, the armed struggle suffered a crippling blow with the arrest of the High Command of MK at Rivonia in 1963 and their imprisonment. The internal network on which the externally trained cadres would depend on their return was crushed. There was no underground network to speak of; many of those who were to constitute its bedrock were also forced into exile or jailed.

In the years preceding the liberation of Mozambique and Angola, the ANC tried to infiltrate men and material through several campaigns and projects such as in Wankie and Siphililo, but the real opportunity to advance the struggle with greater vigour came after the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in 1975. Even then, however, the challenges were massive.

That is the time when our generation and the June 16 Detachment came into the picture to walk in the footsteps of the giants who preceded and inspired us.

The support that countries like Mozambique and later Zimbabwe could offer when we became operational in Mozambique and Swaziland from 1977 could not be so overt as to invite retribution from their powerful neighbour. People and weaponry were infiltrated into and out of these countries clandestinely so as not to expose them to South African aggression. I operated largely from Mozambique and Swaziland. We called that area the Eastern Front. Although the authorities in these countries,

particularly in Mozambique, knew that there were MK cadres and there was movement of hardware through their territories, we were as discrete as circumstances allowed. Explosives, land and personnel mines, rifles, grenades and all manner of weapons were smuggled through the Maputo airport from Lusaka and Luanda by the logistical department then headed by Andrew Masondo. Comrades from both the Luthuli Detachment and the June 16 Detachment smuggled the contraband in the false bottoms of suitcases for delivery to our structures in Maputo. From there the methods of infiltration varied because of the greater scrutiny from the Swazi border authorities.

I became commander of the

“The internal network on which the externally trained cadres would depend on their return was crushed. There was no underground network to speak of; many of those who were to constitute its bedrock were also forced into exile or jailed.”

Transvaal Urban Machinery (TUM) early in 1979 after the death of the first commander of the machinery, Selaelo Ramusi. He died of an asthma attack in a Swazi jail after he was arrested in possession of military hardware.

The normal mode of weapons infiltration at the initial stages of our operations was to physically cross the border illegally carrying the weapons in bags or any suitable containers. We would cross the border of Mozambique through the two fences of no man's land into Swaziland and get into waiting vehicles which would ferry us into the big towns of Swaziland like Manzini and Mbabane where we had residences.

We avoided keeping the weapons

stashed in Swaziland for long periods. Generally, all weapons we infiltrated into Swaziland were destined for further immediate infiltration into South Africa. Very rarely did we replicate the procedure on the Swazi-South Africa side. The extent of the vigilance of the authorities on both sides of the Swazi-South Africa border was higher. This was especially so when we began intensifying our activities internally in 1978 and the enemy responded by setting up regular roadblocks on the major arteries to the interior. Even before then, we did not underestimate our enemy.

The first vehicle we used for weapon infiltration was a yellow Datsun we dubbed Mellow Yellow. The methods of concealing the weapons were not very sophisticated. We removed the fittings on the doors of the vehicle and stuffed the larger weapon items in the spaces of the side doors of the car. We then replaced the fittings and the window and door levers to restore the original look. Detection was always a possibility because the doors became heavy. The capacity was also limited. It was not possible to fit in rifles and bulkier objects like land or limpet mines in those spaces. The smaller items were camouflaged in innocent looking luggage and personal objects which would not raise suspicion during routine searches. These included cigarette boxes, chocolate containers, toothpaste tubes and hard cover books for small items like detonators.

Although most of us were trained in the simple means of hiding small contraband items for transportation in objects like briefcases, we invariably exploited the superlative skills of comrade Wilson (MK Borgard Sowazi), a member of the Luthuli Detachment who was based in Maputo. He was a past master in devising ingenious methods of camouflage with which to infiltrate most of our modest equipment requirements for our units: he could fashion any opaque container of cleaning liquid or vim; a tin of shoe polish or even clothing items like shoes to conceal weapon components or parts. He was also very ready to help and appreciated the recognition we accorded him by tasking him to do the work for us. He would drop everything

to assist and grin his broad gap-toothed smile when he handed over his finished product: "You see my friend," he would beam, "who could ever think that there are detonators or a pistol in here? You can even feel the weight!" he would mutter contentedly. This method of disguise gave confidence to people who were transporting the weapons. On many occasions our units successfully infiltrated with their weapons concealed this way.

After some time, we devised more effective methods of weapons infiltration, particularly as we expanded the scope of our work to include bigger units which required bigger arsenals for their operations. Besides, our area of responsibility was deep into the interior and the risks of routine roadblocks were multiplied manifold, requiring safer methods of smuggling the contraband. Military HQ also relaxed a previous restriction of the kind of weapons we could employ in our operations. This was after the dramatic first use of the AK47 that the G5 unit of the machinery used at the Moroka Police Station in Soweto in 1979. We also felt self-assured and thought it possible to use systems like the Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) in urban operations; we had earned the trust of the leadership with our successes. The initial methods of weapons camouflage were not useful for concealing and transporting bulk quantities and large weapons like rifles and rocket launchers.

In 1979 I was introduced to a Mozambican panel beater by the name of Bernado, with whom I discussed several options for reconfiguring vehicles for the purpose of infiltrating weapons into South Africa from Swaziland. He suggested that we purchase a Ford F250 van. We bought the vehicle through a Swazi contact and transported it to Maputo for Bernado to work on. It was a design feat and a master-stroke in adaptation and camouflage. The carrying capacity of the vehicle was huge: it could carry two RPGs and eight rockets, ten AK47 rifles and their magazines and ammunition as well huge amounts of explosives in a single haul without sagging to the weight. It was a strong vehicle. Four steel compartments were

soldered onto the undercarriage of the vehicle from the bottom, two to the front towards the cab, behind the driver and passenger seats, and the other two at the rear a little distance from the ones on either side of the axle, for balance and symmetry. The two at the front were about a metre square each with a width of about 18 centimetres. They had a trap door which opened downwards for loading and offloading. In these two we loaded items such as limpet mines, explosives, ammunition, grenades and pistols or small automatic weapons like the Scorpion Machine gun. The rear compartments opened from the back and were about one and a half metres long and a metre wide. These were ideal for loading our standard AK rifles and RPGs with the rockets. They were painted black to blend with the rest of the undercarriage.

You had to go right under the van to have a chance of noticing the compartments built onto it. Even

“It was a design feat and a master-stroke in adaptation and camouflage.”

from this viewpoint you had to have a thorough knowledge of the original untampered undercarriage to know that there had been any interference with the vehicle.

I picked two comrades from the camp to transport weapons into the country using this vehicle. This was on account of their thorough knowledge of the Reef or Gauteng as it is now called. They were also licenced drivers who had left the country at a working age, unlike many of the June 16 Detachment cadres. Their pseudonyms were Tito and Mthi.

The pair worked well together. They never encountered problems on their numerous trips into the country. They would cross legally through the borders of Swaziland and South Africa using Swazi documents that had been prepared for us in Luanda. Later we organised our own contacts at the home affairs offices in Mbabane to issue genuine passports for use by

our operatives. This included the pair infiltrating the limpet mines which blew up the Sasol Oil refinery in June 1980, when comrade Obadi, the then special operations commander, requested assistance from our machinery. Tito and Mthi had complete confidence in the vehicle. They gave it a name I was later made privy to: Gazilami (My blood).

In order to minimise the risk of Gazilami and the two comrades being exposed through frequent crossing, we organised another car and another team.

This time we identified a Toyota panel van. The vehicle was what I called a natural. Behind the bottom back of the seats of the panel van was a deep hollow into the body of the van which ran from the driver to the passenger door. This long deep hollow originally housed the fire extinguisher, jack, wheel spanner and other accessories like the emergency triangle. All we had to do was to enclose the hollow from door to door behind the seats in order to conceal anything hidden inside from view in the event of a search. Bernado chose a hardboard of a sufficient thickness which he fastened perpendicularly onto the metal body of the vehicle with screws to conceal the hollow and whatever was to be hidden inside. The space could easily fit an RPG7 and a number of rifles with the rockets and ammunition. He riveted a number of clamps onto the board on which he glued on a carpet matching the interior to hold the spanners, jacks and other accessories.

The handiwork looked more professional than the original look. It was so impressive it looked innocent even to those who were in the know. I had no doubt that no one other than an owner of a similar vehicle would imagine that there could be a different arrangement. Even then, such a person could be forgiven for thinking it was a genuine better version of their own. If Toyota had seen the design, they would have adopted it for their later models. The handy plastic tool-kit to keep the screw drivers and screws to remove the board and replace it was elegantly attached on a clamp alongside the other impressively arrayed accessories. Our commissar, Leonard, not known

for loose liberal expressions thought the handiwork was "just so sexy". We had a name for the vehicle: Ngabisa (Maiden in SiSwati).

The van was also registered in Swaziland and just like the Gazilami, none of us were associated with it. It was only used when there was a need to get weapons to units in the country or to collect weapons from Maputo. The team who used it were Clement and Kakulama.

It served us for a while until a man by the pseudonym of Stopper abandoned the vehicle on his first mission into the country in circumstances he could not satisfactorily explain. We do not know up to now whether his actions were as a result of genuine panic as he alleged, or a deliberate sabotage of the mission. We strongly suspected the latter. But Stopper ended up being one of the ring leaders of the mutiny of 1983 at Pango Camp in which many of our finest comrades were murdered before the rebellion was put down.

Before the Nkomati Accord we accessed our weaponry from the depot which the father-in-law of Sello Motau (MK Paul Dikeledi) kept in his massive garage in Madlangalene, Maputo which could easily have housed four vehicles. He also had a farm in Marracuene which the logistics department used to store a large arsenal which we drew from after the Nkomati Accord. His name was Antonio da Silva Gomes Cordeirao. He was a soft-spoken affable businessman whose daughter Karla was married to Paul.

One of the preparations we had to make before the signature of the accord was the creation of depot facilities in Swaziland. Because of the vulnerability of the accommodation we used and the speed we needed to retreat from exposed residences, we avoided storing the hardware where we lived because it would slow down our pace of retreat and increase the possibility of the capture of our weapon stocks. We therefore preferred to create depots in the terrain.

We had become experts in the creation of dug-in depots which we camouflaged well to ensure that chance passers-by would not suspect. Wherever we dug we ensured that the original top vegetation was replaced

after the completion of our work. Even if it took us several days to loosen the soil we made sure that at the end of each period not even those familiar with the terrain would suspect any interference with the area. The greatest risk was being overheard or spotted digging or visiting the depot to retrieve weapons at a later stage. We thus preferred working deep at night.

It was almost impossible to stumble upon and uncover our depot when we had finished working on it. We made certain to pad the area to harden the surface. You could walk over it without feeling any difference although we often would throw tree branches and little rocks to dissuade people from trampling over the area, especially in the immediate aftermath of the completion of the task. To open the depot so as to access the weapons we created a trap-door, normally made of wood, complete with a strong handle made from rope or weaved straw strong enough to lift the weight of the soil and covering on top of the huge lid. As much as possible, the mouth was designed so that little soil fell into the depot on opening and closing.

By far the biggest such depot we created was at Motjane in Swaziland south of the Oshoek border post, on the small farm of one of our contacts, Paris Twala, whom we called Peasant. It was a veritable room in the ground. This was made possible because it was his private property and he could work without the concerns and the risks we undertook while digging in open terrain. He also did not have neighbours in close proximity snooping; but he still had to be careful in case people drove in or walked in and discovered him digging; so he worked at night and carefully dispersed the massive soil excavated around the farm. When the depot was finished a six foot tall person could walk erect inside it; it was about five to six metres in length and about one and a half metres wide with three half metre deep shelves on which we stored rifles, rockets and launchers, mines, explosives and all manner of weapons which we received from Mozambique.

Paul's father-in-law would drive to Swaziland on agreed days and

hand over the weaponry we had sent requests for. We would then drive to the farm at Motsheni and give the supplies to Paris to store.

After the Nkomati accord we continued to use Gazilami until the arrest in the country of Sotch Dube, who had used the vehicle after Tito and Mthi. Then we could take no chances with it.

We obtained a Peugeot 404 through a contact who was working as a nursing tutor at the Nursing Institute in Mbabane, Sophie Makhubu. The compartment in this vehicle was built by Max Plimenteira, a Mozambican who was now based in Swaziland. It was a simple concealing device built in the boot of the car. He created an optical illusion by building a metal plate behind the original one on which the boot carpet was extended to. The carpet was shortened and neatly glued onto the new plate behind which was a new hollow from the original one running from left to right. This reduced the capacity of the boot but the boot seemed normal because the original size was very large.

There were several other vehicles we employed in the constant search to remain ahead of the enemy and outwit him.

During Operation Vula, we could rely on Logistics HQ headed by Job Tabane and later Rashid Patel to access deposits they made into the country, but for the most part we devised the solutions for ourselves.

In preparation for the Vula mission, I organised several depots in Botswana using the experience of Swaziland. I was assisted by John "Bricks" Manye, Cassius Motswaledi, Deacon Mathe and Zwelibanzi Nyanda. I was able to access the weaponry from inside the country by sending couriers in cars with concealed spaces to pick up the material from Botswana to deposit in the hiding places we had prepared internally.

This account of weapons infiltration as well as other actions recounted by other actors in this issue of *The Thinker* is a reminder of the great courage, heroism and ingenuity displayed by cadres and leaders of our glorious people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). ■

The ANC's Special Operations Unit



MK in Training

The success of the operations can be ascribed to the leadership provided by Tambo and Slovo, the detailed and thorough planning of the Command and the ingenuity, commitment and indomitable will of the cadres based on the trust they had in the leadership and command of Special Operations.

By Aboobaker Ismail (Rashid)

On 16 December, 52 years ago, the first armed actions were undertaken by Umkhonto we Sizwe, which was formed to fight the racist Apartheid state after the banning of the ANC and other liberation movements in SA.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the death of OR Tambo, who as the president of the ANC, kept

the ANC alive in exile, continuing to give political guidance to MK and driving the liberation struggle to its ultimate goal of freedom for all South Africans.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the disbanding of MK before its integration with the other armed forces in SA that led to the formation of the South African

National Defence Force after the first democratic elections in SA on 27 April 1994.

This article aims to highlight just one aspect of key decisions taken by Tambo which had a momentous impact on the conduct of the armed struggle.

Tambo was one of the greatest South Africans in our history, who led the ANC during the most difficult periods when

it was banned and forced to operate from the underground within South Africa and from exile when very few western governments were prepared to assist in the struggle. He, under these most trying of circumstances, had the courage, insight and willingness to take difficult decisions.

The armed struggle took place within a political context and was one of the inter-connected pillars of the struggle. Since the sabotage campaign was undertaken by the first MK cadres, operations were not undertaken on a whim – they followed meticulous planning in accordance with each one of the phases of the armed struggle. In other words, the specific targets for operations changed during specific phases of the armed struggle.

After the Soweto uprising in 1976, thousands of militants joined the ANC in exile. Between 1976 and 1979, there was a steady increase in the number of armed actions ranging from railway lines being sabotaged, attacks on police stations, and for the first time, battles between MK units and police and the SADF took place in the countryside. In total, 37 armed actions took place during the period.

By 1978, the Transvaal Urban Machinery of MK had carried out a number of actions against police stations in the PWV area. At the same time a number of units under the command of the Western Front, operating out of Botswana, had been involved in skirmishes in the Western Transvaal whilst trying to establish a guerrilla presence in the region.

MK, like all guerrilla formations, was faced with the dilemma of establishing itself inside the country in order to wage a successful war. But it was not able to do so without having a political base in these areas. However, to establish a political base the guerrilla army had to carry out successful military operations to win the support of the people. It was understood that the one would lead to the other. It was critical to win the confidence of the people and to be able to show them that the enemy was not invincible. The people would only embark on political and other forms of resistance in support of the liberation movement when they had confidence in the movement.

The intention of this article is not to give an exhaustive history of MK but only to focus on the Special Operations unit which at its inception was under the command of Joe Slovo. When Slovo was appointed Chief of Staff of MK, I was appointed as Commander from April 1983. In August 1987 I was appointed as a Member of the Military Headquarters and Chief of Ordnance. However, I pay tribute to all the fearless cadres attached to the different other units operating on the various 'fronts'. Their experiences should be reflected in the history of MK. As was the case for all cadres, they were prepared to sacrifice their lives in the struggle for freedom of all South Africans.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC in 1979 was requested by Tambo to give him a special mandate to establish a Special

“Tambo was one of the greatest South Africans in our history, who led the ANC during the most difficult periods when it was banned and forced to operate from the underground within South Africa and from exile when very few western governments were prepared to assist in the struggle.”

Operations Unit reporting directly to him, under its own command, led by Slovo. The objective of the unit was to carry out attacks against strategic targets of an economic or military nature designed to have maximum impact. The unit was named the Solomon Mahlangu Unit.

In the last quarter of 1979 Montso Mokgabudi (Obadi) arrived at Funda camp, which was the finishing camp for all cadres on their way to the front. As the then Chief Instructor in

the camp, he requested me with the assistance of Barney Molokwane to train a special unit to carry out select missions inside the country. I was informed of the targets but was told not to discuss these with any of the cadres who had been selected for the training. In December, Slovo and Obadi made the final selection of comrades for the Special Operations mission, based on my recommendations. The unit flew from Angola to Maputo, and was based in Matola.

The unit's first operation was a co-ordinated attack on the SASOL Refineries in Sasolburg and Secunda. Another planned attack against the Mobil Refinery in Durban, which I had reconnoitred, was not carried out due to concerns about civilian casualties, as the local population lived very close to the plant and there were concerns about a gas cloud explosion that could result in major loss of life. As the decision was taken not to continue with the attack against the Mobil Refinery, I was appointed Commissar, as part of the overall command of Special Operations.

Slovo kept Tambo informed of the progress of the mission on a continuous basis. OR, or 'Chief', as he was called by senior comrades, was very keen to know that there was a clear withdrawal plan after the operation. His concern for the safety of comrades was paramount.

Materiel for the SASOL I and Natref operations and that for the Fluor Offices were infiltrated into the country with the assistance of the Transvaal Urban Command led by Gebuza (Siphiwe Nyanda). The materiel for the Secunda operation was to be taken into the country by the unit as they were crossing the border because they did not have to travel a long distance within the country.

The different units were briefed on their missions and told that they had to carry out the operation at a specific time without them being told that these were going to be co-ordinated attacks. The different units also were not allowed to discuss their plans with others who were not part of their own unit.

Once everything was in place the comrades were infiltrated into the

country via Swaziland. They travelled in two cars from the border area in Swaziland but after an accident with one of the cars, they decided to all travel in one car for part of the way rather than abandon their mission. The unit heading for Natref and Sasol I then continued their journey by train and taxis to Sasolburg. As a result of the accident and subsequent time delay, they were unable to get to their predetermined bases. The first unit which attacked Sasol I and Natref, led by Barney Molokwane, included Faku, Jackie, Solly Mayona and Scorpio. Molokwane and some of the comrades went to the local police station, said they were looking for work in the area, asked for an open police cell to sleep in for the night and handed in their forged pass books.

The next evening at the appointed time the unit cut through the fence and carried out their mission of placing the limpet mines that had been especially prepared with thermite (a mixture of iron-oxide and aluminium that when ignited burns at very high temperature), to go off within an hour. They were then able to withdraw even though Jackie had fired on one of the security guards to the complex when he was securing the withdrawal route.

The unit at SASOL II, under Victor Khayiyana included David Moise, Mochudi and Mabena. They also placed their charges and were able to withdraw without incident. This operation was not as spectacular as the ones at SASOL I and Natref, as the fuel tanks were empty. In both cases the units were not able to get to the refractionating towers due to lots of people being present in the area and they resorted to attacks on the tank farms.

The attack on Fluor's offices was carried out by Phiwe. However, the charge was found by a gardener before the explosive device reached its time and was dismantled by the Security Police under controlled circumstances.

The SASOL operations marked a milestone in MK operations, as the enemy was unable to hide the success of the co-ordinated operations. The flames from the burning refineries could be seen from a long distance and burned for 3 days.

The success of the operations can be ascribed to the leadership provided by Tambo and Slovo, the detailed and thorough planning of the Command and the ingenuity, commitment and indomitable will of the cadres based on the trust they had in the leadership and command of Special Operations.

The success of the operation was overwhelming in its armed propaganda value, achieving the objective of winning the support of the people, of showing that the enemy was not invincible. The ANC was able to call on the people for greater involvement in the struggle and spur them on to people's power. One could sense a sea-change in the attitudes of ordinary people in the townships.

Given the success of these operations which were lauded by the ANC leadership, Tambo got a mandate

“It was critical to win the confidence of the people and to be able to show them that the enemy was not invincible.”

from the NEC to continue with these types of Special Operations.

David Moise was captured late in 1980 when he had entered the country on another reconnaissance mission. He was sentenced to death for his role in the operation on SASOL. This fortunately was subsequently commuted to a life sentence.

However, the enemy, stung by the SASOL operations, carried out retaliatory raids on Matola in January 1981, killing 13 ANC members including a number of comrades of the Special Operations Unit. Obadi, who just that day had returned from Angola to prepare for the training of another unit for their next mission was injured and died of his wounds a few days later.

Despite the setbacks and retaliatory raids on Matola and repeated attacks by the enemy forces, Special Operations continued under the leadership of Tambo and Slovo to carry out attacks against numerous strategic targets.

Special Operations next planned a series of attacks on the power grid in its on-going effort to destroy the economic infrastructure within SA. The attacks on the Arnot and Camden power stations and the transformer station north of Pretoria, on the Cabora Basa line, were probably the most detailed and intricately planned attacks that had been undertaken by the Special Operations Command at that stage.

The objective was to take out the energy supply that was so vital to the economy and to begin the process of whittling away at the electrical power network leading to rolling black-outs within the country.

Without going into too much detail, two units crossed the border from Swaziland and carried out daring attacks on the Power Stations. They carried their equipment with them as they went into the attack. A number of internationalists had come into the country earlier on to carry out reconnaissance, map routes and to buy vehicles that the comrades were to use for the operation. Two comrades had been sent in ahead of time to meet the units that crossed the border to carry out the attack. The comrades entered the country, placed the charges, withdrew to Swaziland and were back in Mozambique within 24 hours. This was certainly seen as a feat in detailed planning. The enemy was once again taken totally by surprise.

Within two weeks of the operation against the Power Stations, attacks were carried out within the heart of the SADF's apartheid military machine at Voortrekkerhoogte, just outside Pretoria. A Grad P, an artillery piece, which was 2,54m long, was used for the first time within the country. Five shells were lobbed into the heart of the military zone.

A base was set up in Valhalla with the assistance of internationalists such as Klaas de Jonge and Helene Pastoors. The weapons were then smuggled into the country by the internationalist couple. Barney Molokwane was sent in to do final reconnaissance. Having established that all was in place for the operation to continue, the couple withdrew and the rest of the unit comprising Johnny Mashigo (Vuyisile Matroos), Sidney Sibepe, Johannes

Mnisi and Vicks moved into the base. They were able to carry out the operation within a few days of their arrival in the country.

The operation was a huge success. This operation signalled a shift in Umkhonto we Sizwe's armed struggle, from economic to military targets and from power stations to the very power at the heart of apartheid.

Operations such as the attack on Voortrekkerhoogte clearly showed that the combatants were highly disciplined – they did not attack other targets or whites in the surrounding areas while they were being hunted by the regime. While MK had the means and capacity to attack civilians, it did not take the easy route. Instead, it concentrated on military targets and state infrastructure.

Cadres in the camps in Angola interpreted the success of the operation as a signal that they were going home soon. In little more than a year, MK's invigorated "armed propaganda" had progressed from hitting Sasol I and II to power stations and then to a military base at Voortrekkerhoogte.

On December 18, 1982 – two days after MK celebrated its 21st anniversary – four blasts struck at another of apartheid South Africa's major economic projects: the high-security Koeberg Nuclear Power Plant. The objective of this operation was to strike at this keystone project before the facility would go live. According to estimates released later by Eskom, the building of Koeberg had been delayed by 12 months and the damage amounted to over R500 million. Rodney Wilkinson with the support of his wife had carried out the operation.

By the end of 1982, the Special Operations Command discussed striking at military personnel concentrated in large numbers so that the enemy could not hide the loss of life from the people. Enemy personnel were always deemed legitimate targets in any war situation. The ANC had declared war on the apartheid state at the inception of MK. This was therefore not a change in policy but was an extension of the accepted policy of the ANC.

Various reconnaissances had taken place to determine the most suitable target. It was agreed that the South

African Air Force Headquarters would be a legitimate target. It was also agreed that an operation undertaken at the right time of the day would strike overwhelmingly at military personnel outside a military target. Slovo reported the planned operation to Tambo and had received authority to execute the operation.

On May 20, 1983 a car bomb exploded outside the SAAF headquarters in Church Street, Pretoria. As a result 19 people were killed, including 11 Air Force officers. More than 200 military personnel and civilians were injured. The ANC had signed the Geneva Convention but the apartheid state had not signed it. The Geneva Convention prohibits the establishment of military installations in civilian areas. Unfortunately, there were some civilian casualties. Sadly the two operatives who carried out the attack also died when the device went off slightly prematurely.

“OR, or ‘Chief’, as he was called by senior comrades, was very keen to know that there was a clear withdrawal plan after the operation. His concern for the safety of comrades was paramount.”

During my testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I stated that “I regret the deaths of innocent civilians killed in the cause of the fight for justice and freedom. The ANC has never been callous in its struggle. We never set out deliberately to attack civilian targets. We followed the political objectives of the African National Congress in the course of a just struggle”.

During this time, Special Operations in 1981 also established a unit code-named Dolphin (in honour of Montso Mokgabudi who had assumed the name Dolphin Ngake). This unit had been established as an internal

unit inside the country to carry out operations within the broad mandate of the ANC and MK.

The unit comprised of Mohamed Iqbal Shaik and Mohamed Abdulhai Ismail. Unlike other operations of Special Operations which were at the time given specific operations to carry out with a high level of planning on behalf of the Command, this unit was mandated to select specific targets which they were able to carry out within the means that they had and which did not go outside of the policy of the ANC. This unit carried out numerous operations inside the country without being detected. They at a later stage continued to assist with infiltration, storage and delivery of weapons inside the country including the phase when it was necessary to arm the self-defence units. The unit only surfaced when its members had to give testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Special Operations also planned and co-ordinated the attack carried out by Hein Grosskopf on the Wits Command.

Attacks against the Electricity Power Grid code-named Operation Blackout were also carried out during these years.

Over the years Special Operations carried out many operations against strategic and military targets. Gordon Webster and Robert McBride were also members of Special Operations. Unfortunately these are too numerous to go into for the purposes of this article. Robert McBride was saved from the gallows at a very late stage, owing to the efforts of selfless people inside the country, and to international pressure.

Invariably the movement called on the most successful cadres to repeatedly go into action time and again. In the process many of the cadres laid down their lives. Not many survived.

In my concluding statement at the first TRC hearing in Pretoria, I had stated that “I am proud of the bravery, discipline and selfless sacrifices of the cadres of Special Operations who had operated under my command. Many of them laid down their lives in the pursuit of freedom for all in South Africa...”.■

The Freedom Amp and the Cooler Box



I then realised at that moment that my path to freedom through music would henceforth be intertwined with underground activities. I joined MK as an underground operative.

By Siphon "Hotstix" Mabuse

In the sixties and early seventies the Communist Party of Vietnam and the national liberation fighters in South Vietnam - popularly known as the Vietcong - took on the fire-power, B-52 bombers and the might of the US military machine and defeated them. In 1968, North Vietnam and The Vietcong surprised both the US and the South Vietnam in an assault that would be known as the Tet offensive. The Tet offensive became the watershed and a turning point in the war because Lyndon Johnson (then US president) now faced an unhappy American public as well as massive international protest.

The struggle of the Vietnamese commanded the attention, respect and support of the progressive forces in the world. The anti-Vietnam war

movement became one of the most powerful international solidarity movements in world history.

At that time our own struggle was at low ebb and that heroic struggle led by Ho Chi Minh and General Giap had a profound influence on our people inside and outside the country.

The ANC and SACP developed close fraternal relations with the Vietnamese and learnt a great deal from their experiences.

The Woodstock Music Festival - 3 days of Peace and Music

In 1969 five hundred thousand (500 000) people descended on a farm outside New York in what was to be the biggest music festival ever in history - The Woodstock Music Festival. What

was meant to be a rock festival also turned into a *peace protest* against American involvement in the Vietnam War. One performer named Jimi Hendrix gave a sterling rendition of The Star Spangled Banner (US national anthem) in a psychedelic rock feel. Hendrix would become an iconic figure in the American Rock Hall of Fame. He helped develop and establish guitar sound amplification using a tiny box with a speaker so powerful and loud that it became popularly known as the Freedom Amp.

The Beaters

In 1968 at the time of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam I joined fellow students at Orlando West High School to form a band called the Beaters. Although I had been born and raised in a family that had ANC membership and my father had been active in his branch, I never was an activist, even though at a tender age I had joined my father during the Anti-pass campaign. I had little knowledge or understanding of politics. I remember seeing black, green and gold stickers, posters and badges in boxes at my parent's house.

My music career would grow until I was privileged to travel the world over.

Orlando West

Orlando West was a bedrock of resistance and liberation politics, whose residents included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Zeph Mothopeng, Duma Nokwe: further inward in Mofolo, Mangaliso Sobukwe, Lancelot and Henry Makgothi (who were my father's associates), PQ Vundla and the Dr. AB Xuma; in Dube, Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Ma Helen Khuzwayo and many others. These men and woman would have an indelible influence on many young people in and around the area that included Siphwe Nyanda, his two brothers Zweli and Banzi, the Sexwale brothers Mathabatha, Lesetja, Mosima (Tokyo), Johnny and a sister Magirlie and many other young people who would ultimately leave the country to join the liberation struggle and respective liberation armies.

Joining the Underground

Although I was a Black Consciousness

adherent and subscribed to its precepts, I was nevertheless attracted to the strong MK armed struggle adventurism and heroism.

In 1980, our band Harari was invited to perform at a festival in Lesotho by Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela who were also exiled. Thousands of South Africans descended to the Mountain Kingdom for the historic pilgrimage.

I had known and hung out with Lesetja (who we called Krappies) and his brother Mathabatha who was a bass guitarist for the All Rounders (we called him Booker T). I was elated to see Krappies, whom I had not seen in a long time. Little did I know that he and his brothers had long skipped the country to join MK. Krappies and I had a long friendly chat in a spirit of camaraderie and reminisced about our escapades in the neighbourhood. I think at that moment Krappies knew that he could trust me and started telling me about his involvement in the liberation armed struggle and asked if I could act as a courier for propaganda material and gave me a bunch of key rings with ANC emblems and some pamphlets. Needless to say I was flustered and petrified.

The following day I met his brother Booker T at the Victoria Hotel where I also saw Jackie Selebi and others that I had known back home. I then realised that many young people had left the country to join the liberation struggle. Booker T continued to exhort me not to be fearful and handed me two little books! WOW. I then realised at that moment that my path to freedom through music would henceforth be intertwined with underground activities. I joined MK as an underground operative. My trusted confidante inside the country became Zwelakhe Sisulu whom I could trust because he was Walter's son. I went to see him and spoke about my involvement; in return he came to my home to collect the material.

I was touring the neighbouring countries extensively as a musician and would invariably meet with some of the comrades including Bricks Manye, Joe `General` Nxumalo and a gentle very kind, pleasant Mduduzi Guma (who was killed by the South African

forces in the Matola raid) Siphwe Nyanda, Viva, Mateu Solly Shoke (now the Chief of the South African Defence force) Phumi Nxumalo Mpopu. We would engage in general and political discussions. On one of the trips to Swaziland, Johnny Sexwale and I began talking about possibilities of transporting arms into South Africa, but his brother Booker T was a little reluctant and advised against me undertaking such a task as he thought my movements were being monitored. Justifying his suspicion, when I reached the border on my return to S.A. my car was pulled aside, searched by sniffer dogs and I was interrogated for about an hour.

Hiding places

By now my underground activities were intensifying, I was moving material concealed in musical instruments, a feat we learnt and developed with

“What was meant to be a rock festival also turned into a *peace protest* against American involvement in the Vietnam War.”

Paul Langa on our trips to and from Zimbabwe.

My house in Pimville became a safe house for M.K operatives brought in, either by Mama Winnie or Zinzi. I would invariably find other safe houses for operatives. One such house belonged to composer, musician and producer Sello Chicco Twala. Tragically some of the operatives, who had apparently been spied on by Jerry Richardson, died in a shoot-out with the security police

One evening I receive a phone call from Zinzi who requested for a meeting. She arrived with four men I had never seen or met. She introduced Siphu, Victor, Pat (Pearl Martins) and Mabiletsa (who would become one of Tata Mandela's trusted security officers) as MK operatives.

“Siphu, these are comrades on a mission,” she said with a straight face.

I took a deep breath and remained silent for a few minutes, the whole atmosphere was tense. My mind was in turmoil. What was I to do? Chief Pat continues, with a voice determined to make the point hit home; “We have to transport arms to Cape Town.” What!!? Although I had known and trusted Zinzi, I did not know how to react nor respond to this and to what extent she had trusted me. “How are we to do this?” I asked. “You are going on a tour to Cape Town.”

Za, who I learnt was Zweli Hlongoane's brother, owned a fleet of taxis and a successful filling station and he would provide transport. My music career and popularity was at a high even amongst all races. Perfect! I will act as the decoy, phew! My thoughts are with my little girls, I had just started a family. What happens, should something go awry? As the saying went *forward yes, backwards never, the dye was cast: it had to be done*. The temptation for military adventurism suddenly seemed romantic and great, but scary. I owned musical equipment big enough to run a festival. An idea had been hatched apparently, all what was required of me is to agree and participate.

A huge cache of arms was brought into the studio and we began dismantling the speaker boxes. There were 20 limpets, 16 of which got attached to the speaker magnets: 6 AKS strapped to a travel piano string section. Then what do we do with the remaining limpets, grenades, rounds of ammunition etc.? My creative ingenuity kicks in, I had a very small speaker amp, remember that one? *The Freedom Amp*. Yes we stripped and attached the four remaining limpets inside and replaced the cover tightly. I had a red *cooler box* into which all the other little `toys` were stuffed, covered in lots of soft drinks, provisions and lots and lots of ice. The stuff was loaded onto the roof of the microbus. We had two huge posters announcing `Hotstix on Tour` pasted on both sides of the microbus.

The following day early in the morning as we were about to leave, I looked back to see my mother who had followed me outside, looking forlorn. I went back to her and implored her to move back into the house. She just

shook her head, with sadness and tears welling in her eyes, she said: Ucabanga ukuthi angazi ukuthi u wenzani (you think I do not know what you are up to)? I was hurting from such emotion, knowing that it could perhaps be the last time I see my dear mother, but she eventually relented and bravely said: Hai! Hamba mntanam uma ku khona okuzo enzakala, ku zabe kungaqali ngawe (Go my son, if anything were to happen you would not be the first, it's for a cause we all believe in). I then understood why she and my father had joined the ANC and had been active. For me, there was no turning back, my resolve was strengthened by her comment. I thanked her, gave her a hug and left for Cape Town.

We drove in a convoy, Za and I in the microbus, Siphon, Victor and I think it was Tebogo were in a small car. We stopped in Kroonstad for petrol and a bit of rest. Suddenly the small car would not move! Apparently whoever was the driver was not experienced and burnt out the clutch: that put paid to the idea of a convoy. The car was left in Kroonstad for some lucky stranger. It was decided that all of us would now have to drive in the Microbus from Kroonstad. I was amazed at how calm the operatives were; oblivious to possible exposure, arrest, torture and even death.

This became one of the longest trips I have ever undertaken. Za was probably used to driving such long distances and acquitted himself extraordinarily throughout this journey with occasional help from me.

We were in Worcester close to the tunnel. Suddenly we were surrounded by a mob of policemen in Camouflage uniform. Siphon, who was sitting next me, nudged me and said: "Bra Sira! vuka mhlekazi yi mission yakho ngoku kumele ku thethe wena" (Wake up it's your mission now, you have to do the talking).

Have we been sold out, has someone snitched on us?

"Where are you guys going to?" one chap asks the driver.

"We are going with Siphon Hotstix Mabuse to Cape Town for a tour," he replies.

"Where is he?"

"I am here sir. Good evening, gentlemen."

"Ha! exactly it is him!"

My mind is racing, my heart pounding heavily. Could someone have snitched on us?

Meanwhile Za and I are the most vulnerable because the other guys are armed and may be able to shoot their way out should the need arise. However everyone remains calm while I extol and shake hands with the cops for their commitment. Some even ask for autographs. An older guy, however, seems more curious and trains his eyes on the equipment above, which makes me a bit anxious.

"Wat is daar bo?" (what is up there)? He asks, inquisitively.

"Loud speakers sir," I respond. He

“In 1980, our band Harari was invited to perform at a festival in Lesotho by Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela who were also exiled. Thousands of South Africans descended to the Mountain Kingdom for the historic pilgrimage.”

notices the small speaker amplifier on the floor. "and this one?" as he picks it up.

"Jislaaik! Hierde f...n goed is so swaar" (Jewaz! This thing is bloody heavy) "Wat is in daar?" (What is in there?).

"It's called the *Freedom amp*"; and I continue to extol its rock sound virtuosity, explaining how powerful and loud it is that would literally blast one's ears, played at close proximity - but then the expression was figurative - considering what was in the box.

We continue engaging in small talk and he suddenly opens the *Cooler box*. I get a lump in my throat but react quickly to assure him that there is no alcohol in there but soft drinks

and immediately offer a few in order to deflect attention from the box. We are allowed to proceed after a few goodbyes. The silence is deafening as we drive through the tunnel, hardly a word or a sigh of relief.

We all perhaps were thinking, "What if...?" We kept looking back to ascertain that we were not being followed or they had not deliberately let us go in order to fire a rocket launcher after us as they had done to some operatives. Phew!!!

We survived, we arrived in Cape Town, in the early hours of the morning.

I had been given the task of communicating with one comrade to take us to the place to deliver the material. I found a public phone and dialled the number. The whole sequence was like a movie scene, all the clandestine activities; a man walks past me and calls out my name without even looking at me; imagine the shock, intrigue, I am flustered. "Follow me and don't look back" he instructs. We get to the car, where he instructs me again to follow his car. Driving around through alleys in order to avoid detection, we reach our destination - a church! WOW!!!! So, THIS is the struggle! The material is offloaded and hidden in some compartments.

"I always suspected that you were a 'terrorist' after experiencing one of your performances in Namibia," says the priest. "I could never, in my wildest dreams, imagine a man of the cloth involved in the armed struggle," I retort. A just war against repression will always justify any means necessary, to quote Malcolm X. We shake hands and say our goodbyes. Off we drive, back to Jo'burg.

Today we and the Vietnamese are liberated from the scourge of racist, imperial and reactionary regimes. Woodstock set the tone for musical festivals with political content. Later the British anti-apartheid movement and the ANC under the directorship of Tony Hollingsworth organised two major broadcasting events of leading artists from the world in support of Nelson Mandela and our struggle. Hundreds of millions of people watched those events. The impact, I guess, was even greater than Woodstock. ■

LET FREEDOM REIGN



IDRIS
ELBA

NAOMIE
HARRIS

TONY
KGORGE

RIAAD
MOOSA

LINDIWE
MATSHIKIZA

TERRY
PHETO

MANDELA

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

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Safari of a special type

I simply did not feel prepared, I had hardly any experience even driving a car, I had no real knowledge of the route or the mechanics of the vehicle, and I had only just turned 19.

By Stuart Round

This is the story of a journey. For me, it started in the quiet suburbs of a small town in the Midlands of England and ends a world away, at the tip of Africa, and on the frontline of a revolution. Whilst traversing some 7,000 miles of rugged terrain on a geographical level, intellectually it describes a longer and equally arduous journey; my transition from a young, nationalistic, white Englishman, promising schoolboy, son of a teacher and lay preacher, into a committed revolutionary, running arms into South Africa at risk of the death penalty if caught.

Being born in England in the late 1960s, I had parents who were just old enough to remember the war, so it was quite understandable that whenever a personification of evil was needed it was always Hitler and the Nazis who were invoked. Hollywood style, the world was conveniently divided into 'goodies' and 'baddies'. The assumption that we were the 'goodies' was never questioned, and was repeated in everything from films to childhood games. Throughout my years at school the Empire was presented as a zenith of achievement, a benevolent and progressive enterprise that had helped to spread the technology and infrastructure, values and morality which had helped to 'civilise' the world.

A love for the places you grew up, the people, the scenery, the history, and the cultural cues which resonate with everything that you know and is familiar, home, is not of itself a bad thing. It's considered normal, even desirable, but it can easily turn into something quite unhealthy. Once the foundations of all that I had believed to be true began to crumble the entire edifice of my world view came crashing down. The more I learnt the more I realised that everything that I had been taught was a lie, everything I believed was wrong.

The successful defence by 150 men of Rorke's Drift in 1879 remains legendary amongst the annals of British military history, whilst the truly remarkable events of the previous day, the defeat of a modern 1,200 strong army by indigenous forces at the battle of Isandlwana, is almost

forgotten. Similarly, Lord Kitchener remains famous as the face of the army recruitment posters, 'Your country needs you!' rather than as the architect of concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer war in which tens of thousands perished through disease and neglect. The links between the introduction of concentration camps in South Africa by Kitchener, the reproduction of that concept by the German colonisers of Namibia, and the return of that idea to Europe to be later translated into the industrial killing factories of the holocaust is barely, if ever, mentioned at all.

In an age where technology enabled the military conquest of entire continents, the European elite became intoxicated with power and convinced of their innate superiority: they believed that the natural world was a source of potential wealth, yet feared it. It was dangerous and wild, an enemy to be tamed by technology and bent to the will of civilisation through force and engineering. Nowhere was more an epitome of the forces of nature than Africa and the dark people who lived there, godless, naked and bestial. At the same time, that the great European unwashed, the lice ridden, flea infested peasants and workers who toiled in the factories and fields were afforded a greater value, resulting from their utility - their ability to do work and die in battle for their overlords.

Racism played an important function, it gave even the most menial European a sense of superiority over at least somebody and that snobbery militated against the identification of common interests between the various groups who were differently oppressed and exploited. Empire was built on class, justified by a religious sense of entitlement, and maintained through inculcating even the lowliest colonialist with sufficient patriotism that they took pride in the reflected glory of the achievements of their masters and betters, like scraps thrown to a dog.

Whilst I felt no personal responsibility for the wrongs of the past, I did however recognise the privileges it had given me. Since the days of the Empire the living conditions for British workers had steadily improved as a result of social reform and many often bitter

and violent industrial disputes and civil campaigns. After leaving school I was becoming politicised in opposition to Thatcherism and the destruction of many traditional working class industries. The jingoistic nationalism which exploded around me during the Falklands War left me cold, it horrified me; it embodied everything I liked least about my country. The ever present threat of nuclear war was an existential threat to humanity, and I no longer believed that the Cold War had anything to do with 'freedom and democracy'. It was simply a conflict over access to resources and markets, and the West, from Chile to Indonesia, Israel to South Africa was prepared to steamroller over the rights of people in pursuit of the economic interests of the ruling class. Each year around 6 million people, the majority of them children, would die for want of basic necessities

“Once the foundations of all that I had believed to be true began to crumble the entire edifice of my world view came crashing down. The more I learnt the more I realised that everything that I had been taught was a lie, everything I believed was wrong.”

while the world turned its back and spent billions on weapons of war. This was a silent holocaust, and by doing nothing to oppose it I felt complicit.

Idealism is the prerogative of youth. I was angry that I had been lied to; I was scared that the world could end; I was horrified at the inhumanity all around me. I wanted to do something to make a difference. I wanted to change the world.

I became active first in the peace movement, going on demonstrations, even getting arrested twice. I ran a local Youth CND (Campaign for Nuclear

Disarmament) group and took part in regional and national conferences. I began to attend a Marxist education group run by local communists, where finally I was given the tools that really enabled me to analyse and understand the world around me, and where I gained a sense of internationalism and solidarity with those engaged in anti-imperialist struggles around the globe. I joined the anti-Apartheid Movement.

Then, one day after a meeting I was approached by a comrade I knew well, and he asked me if I'd be prepared to go abroad to help in a liberation struggle. I didn't doubt for a moment that this was a serious offer, or that it would be dangerous and could possibly end my life. However, it was also exactly the kind of opportunity I'd been waiting for to be able to do something meaningful and concrete, so I agreed.

Soon afterwards, a meeting was arranged in London where I went to meet Aziz Pahad. We met in a pub, but then hurriedly had to relocate to another as it turned out the executive committee of the London anti-Apartheid Movement had also just walked in. He asked me questions about myself, my motivation and circumstances, and I guess I must have answered them well because soon a further meeting was arranged with 'The London Traders', a group of ANC exiles who were co-ordinating a gun running operation from London.

A safari company called Africa Hinterland had been set up and it was offering a 7 week trip from Nairobi to Cape Town. The vehicle had been modified with secret compartments into which 1 tonne of small arms and ammunition would be loaded for delivery to MK in South Africa.

The first thing I needed to do was to learn to drive. I stayed in London with one of Mannie Brown's sons and began my lessons. One weekend he drove me to Ipswich to meet Rodney Wilkinson, who I knew as 'Jimmy', to take a look at the vehicle. It was absolutely huge, a 10 tonne Bedford 4x4 with a custom built passenger compartment on the rear. Suddenly things were starting to seem very real, frightening, but also exciting. Jimmy asked me if I could find the compartments, which to be



Game drive

fair was made a little easier because there was none of the gear which would later fill the side compartments. I crouched, moved around, sizing up the construction of the truck, and sure

“I was horrified at the inhumanity all around me. I wanted to do something to make a difference. I wanted to change the world.”

enough I gave the right answer. My initial pleasure at having succeeded faded very quickly as I realised the implications!

Once I'd passed my driving test there was more waiting before the safaris could get underway, so Mannie gave me a little money and I went off to hitch-hike around Europe. This was a good opportunity to gain some travelling experience which would help establish my 'legend', but equally as important it was an opportunity to do some growing up. I was still only 18 years of age!

Eventually I found myself on a plane to Nairobi, really having little idea what

to expect. For this first trip I was to be a passenger, there to observe and learn, to check out the other passengers for apartheid spies, and then to carry the location of the dead drop into South Africa revealing myself to the driver at the end of the trip.

Nairobi was quite overwhelming, and nothing like I'd expected it to be. It was a thriving, bustling city as opposed to the colonial outpost with dusty streets I'd seen in old movies. I met with the other passengers and saw the truck in situ for the first time. After a few briefings we set off.

The safari itself was good value for money, and good fun. Having backpacked around Europe I didn't mind that it was quite rough and ready, sleeping in tents, cooking on an open fire, shopping in the local markets. It was a great way to actually experience Africa rather than just see it out of the window of a luxury safari van.

This first trip soon fell well behind schedule but eventually we made it to Lusaka where the truck was to be loaded. There, I met up with Jimmy who gave me the location for my debriefing and I was introduced to Rashid (Aboobaker Ismail) and some of the other comrades I had met in London. I had much to report as one of the passengers was raising serious concerns in my mind. He was an Australian who very closely matched the profile that Jimmy had given me to watch for, and travelling through Africa his contempt for black people had been difficult to conceal. I was certain that if there was a spy on board it was him. A sobering discussion then followed. The options for how to deal with him varied between doing nothing to having him arrested and bumped off. If I had been in any doubt of the seriousness of the enterprise I was now part of, then those doubts were dispelled at this point.

It may perhaps seem contradictory to go from being a peace activist to a gun runner contemplating killing someone, and certainly it was an unusual progression. But it was evident that in South Africa all other means of opposition had been very firmly closed off. People were being arrested, detained without trial, tortured and murdered, all the time. Demonstrators were gunned down in the streets and



Doing some washing



Truck repairs

activists banned and placed under house arrest. The vested interests defending apartheid were so powerful that it seemed that no compromise could ever be reached; if the people were to be free then they were going to have to fight for it.

In the end, we decided to do nothing. If he was a spy then removing him would surely confirm any suspicions, and if we were going to succeed then we needed to be able to withstand all levels of scrutiny. We just had to rely on the strength of our cover and hope that he had found nothing to report. Many questions had been raised about the directors of Africa Hinterland, although the suggestion that the company was a tax write off seemed to have satisfied at least some of that curiosity. The driver's relationship with many of the passengers had also become strained, and this was something else I reported too.

However, events soon overtook this discussion as after leaving Lusaka

and reaching Livingstone the trip was called off. The Soviet embassy in Harare had intercepted radio traffic which appeared to be alerting the border posts to be on the look-out for a truck matching our description. This was a huge anti-climax. I was then given instructions to proceed alone into South Africa anyway, if possible on another truck to see how thorough the border checks were. Interestingly, the last seat on any truck going into South Africa had already been taken by the suspected spy, so I hitch-hiked in instead.

After a few weeks of discussions it was decided to try another run. I had been expecting to drive the next trip with the same driver, but his girlfriend had become pregnant and so I was now to drive it alone. This came as rather a shock, although Mannie seemed to have confidence in me which was reassuring, but suddenly far from being easy going and fun, life was about to become very tough indeed. I simply

did not feel prepared, I had hardly any experience even driving a car, I had no real knowledge of the route or the mechanics of the vehicle, and I had only just turned 19.

Still, there was no choice, there was no one else.

The following 7 weeks were the hardest of my life. Some days I would be driving for 18 hours, and then do routine checks and maintenance on the truck afterwards. The responsibility weighed very heavily on my shoulders, the dangers weighed on my mind. The roads were treacherous, pot-holed and narrow, there were wild animals to contend with, there were a whole catalogue of diseases to catch all with life threatening consequences, and southern Africa was on a war footing with armed soldiers and police check points everywhere. As each day passed though, my confidence grew. Every other overland driver I came across was a source of valuable information and advice and I would pick their brains

ravenously. I became familiar with the truck, its size and handling, how the various systems on it worked, and the Bedford manual was never far from my side.

Somehow I reached Lusaka on time, in one piece and with a fairly contented full complement of passengers. There, the truck was loaded and this time there was no cancellation.

The South African border approached ominously. I felt vulnerable and alone. I couldn't imagine anything beyond that border; all of my hopes and dreams, everything I ever wanted to do in my life was beyond sight, all I could see was blackness, a void. This was what I wanted to do; I had no doubts about that. I was equally determined that I would not succumb to fear. Wherever there is injustice and oppression it can only ever be overcome if people are prepared to take risks despite whatever threats or dangers they face. This time, this duty had fallen to me.

I adopted a fatalistic attitude. Whether it was this trip, the next, or the one after that it seemed that given all of the risks I was facing survival was unlikely. I came to terms with that, there could be no compromise.

I slept well the night before the border crossing, and we reached it nice and early. It helped to be surrounded by the carefree and happy passengers. They were looking forward to sealed roads, shops and burger bars, so I took my cue from them. I forced all of those negative thoughts to the back of my mind, consciously avoided even thinking about the 32 AK47s, the limpet mines, the hand grenades, pistols and ammunition hidden behind a thin veneer of legitimacy and about 1mm of steel in the truck parked at the border behind me.

Oddly, the border guards' interest in the truck did not arise from suspicion, but envy. They asked if I was carrying a weapon out of concern for how anyone could travel through 'black Africa' without one. Then they brought out the sniffer dog that ran around the outside and then the inside of the truck, where he promptly sat down. "Do you have guns on board?" the customs officer asked. "No, but there are armed soldiers on and off here all

the time", I replied. Remarkably, he seemed more inclined to believe me than his dog, and so we were cleared and proceeded to enter South Africa.

On arriving in Cape Town I was met by the previous driver. We found a secluded camp site and hired a van to transfer the boxes of weapons into. We hired another car too so we could scout the route for roadblocks before attempting the delivery. Once that was done, we proceeded to the dead drop and then, with the relevant signage in place to indicate that the van was safe to approach, disappeared into the city.

For security reasons we could not meet the cadres who were collecting and unloading the van. The waiting seemed interminable. When eventually the time came to collect

“The vested interests defending apartheid were so powerful that it seemed that no compromise could ever be reached; if the people were to be free then they were going to have to fight for it.”

the now empty van we made our way back to the dead drop and took a good look around. Everything seemed in order, but if things were going to go wrong this seemed the most likely moment. With some trepidation, we approached the van and drove away. Nothing happened.

The tension dissipated after that point, but didn't entirely disappear until I had exited the South African border and watched it recede behind me. It felt amazing.

Soon, we recruited and trained additional drivers. That really helped because it meant we could alternate between trips and take a break from the nervous tension and work. Running the safaris by itself was quite a challenge even without the additional part at the

end. Familiarity helped though, and over time a feeling of confidence and competence developed. Finally, we felt like we knew what we were doing.

Over the next 7 years Africa Hinterland did 40 trips into South Africa, each time transferring a tonne of weapons. No one was ever caught. I continued for around 5 years, before finally feeling burnt out and retiring. The strain was taking its toll on me, but it's also hard to continue to live a lie. All of your relationships suffer, and living as someone else is confusing. It becomes impossible to tell where the person you're pretending to be starts and ends. For years afterwards I suffered with PTSD, and part of the problem with that was that it was hard to feel justified. In actuality, I had had the time of my life. It was great to feel part of something which was making history and which eventually would play a part in the liberation of a country and the ending of a truly vile and inhuman system. Afterwards, I was left searching for the same meaning, the same thrills, challenges and excitement. Adrenaline and risk taking becomes addictive.

All of this was tempered though by the knowledge of how badly things could have turned out. Had we been caught we would have faced torture and probably death, as did so many others through the course of the struggle. Whilst we were helping to provide the people with the tools to fight their oppressors we also knew those who wielded those weapons also risked their lives, and would be taking lives. We had no choice but to trust in them not to be reckless and not to seek vengeance as opposed to justice.

As history has unfolded those fears have proved groundless. In the end the transition to democracy was relatively peaceful and all out civil war was avoided, but only through compromises. Whilst life has improved drastically for many, still too many others live in poverty and want.

Ultimately, the fate of South Africa now lies in the hands of its people, where it belongs. Whatever the successes or failures of the ANC as a government, at least now the people are free to decide their own future. I remain very proud to have played a small part in achieving that victory. ■

UNDERGROUND OPERATIONS IN THE FRONTLINE STATES

The role of African Internationalists



The Swazi internationalists, if we wish to use that term, were the water in which the MK swam like fish. We were at home. They, for all intent and purposes, were our comrades. Some died fighting together with us. Others lost their possessions or suffered sanction from the conservative Swazi government system.

By Damian de Lange

Twenty years into democracy in South Africa and most of us probably no longer cast our minds back to the days when the Apartheid Regime hunted down its opponents like dogs in the veld. Among the hunted were those who chose to support and serve as comrades-in-arms – these were the internationalists without whom the South African road to liberation would have been much

longer and much more difficult.

Umkhontwe Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC, was a volunteer army and not all ANC members volunteered to be members of MK. MK was formed in 1961 and began as a sabotage and armed propaganda military force. By the 1980s MK had grown to become a more organised and commanded force with several formal military training camps in Angola and informal

training areas in the Frontline States. MK's command structure sat in Lusaka, Zambia, with regional structures in the Frontline States and clearly defined operational structures in the "Forward Areas" that were linked to operations inside South Africa.

In 1985 Swaziland was in the frontline of the battle against the Apartheid South African regime. The battle against Apartheid was a battle of life and death which claimed lives and limbs, destroyed homes and families in South Africa and in the neighbouring states or Frontline States as they were called.

Swaziland was one of the Frontline States, a "forward area." It is one of Africa's smallest countries, a former British protectorate and one of the remaining monarchies in Africa. A country with some of the oldest mountains in the world endowed with breath-taking beauty ranging from misty mountains to hot brush-covered lowveld plains. A country with few natural resources, a relatively small population; and trapped between South Africa and Mozambique.

In 1985 Swaziland was nominally ruled by the Queen Mother and driven by a council of men who seemed to have moved away from the late King Sobhuza's attempt to steer a middle road between the demands of the resource-rich apartheid South Africa and the wider African nationalist agenda of the rest of Africa. The move away from Sobhuza's middle road was towards the Pretoria government's objectives and enabled greater collaboration between the South African security forces and elements of the Swazi security establishment.

In the mid-1980s the apartheid government was reaping the benefits of its Nkomati Accord with Mozambique. The agreement saw the Mozambican government move most of the liberation army guerrillas out of Mozambique which effectively cut the support for military and political operations through Swaziland into the central and eastern parts of South Africa.

The apartheid government made great use of the tactical space for manoeuvre they had created through the Nkomati Accord, increasing their

operations into Swaziland to hunt down, kill and capture members of the African National Congress, its soldiers of MK and any supporters. With their hallmark arrogance the Pretoria regime trampled on international norms, raiding homes at will and killing anyone they believed to be an “enemy of the state” knowing that the west would issue a statement of “concern” at best.

This was the Swaziland I travelled to in late 1985. Deployed as a soldier of Umkhonto we Sizwe, or MK as it was more fondly known, I would work in Swaziland for a little over a year. This was a very short time compared to others who worked in similar areas and compared to the nationals who called Swaziland home and provided support for the ANC and MK.

During my short time in Swaziland countless cross-border raids were conducted by Pretoria. MK members were killed and captured to be taken back across the border to be tortured and if lucky to be put on trial and jailed. Houses that the Boers believed were being used by the AC or MK or supporters were raided and destroyed. Often the wrong houses were raided and innocent people, generally Swazis, were killed or maimed or captured.

When working “underground” MK operatives often had a “legend”. The “legend” was a created life story that was to enable the person to present themselves as someone who had a history and a reason for being where they were. The “legend” was a critical part of the camouflage of an underground operative.

Life for me was a weird contradiction. I was “Mike Lang”, a Zambian national working legally as a free-lance photographer and at the same time participating in technically illegal military operations. This meant long hours working during the day and then again at night. Our ‘underground’ work involved moving people and equipment to the border with South Africa, meeting people from South Africa who brought news, or important information or who had come out to collect material for operations in South Africa. We slept armed. I was often scared and fear became a kind of speed that kept me going, constantly

moving and constantly working.

I had never been to Swaziland before and through work and everyday life I got to see the country's beauty and I got to meet and know many Swazi nationals. And, I got to work with Swazi nationals who supported our cause, lived with our hopes and dreams, and often sacrificed much to provide us with support, friendship, love and, in a way, a glimpse of a normal life.

Through the political teachings in the camps of Angola I had learnt about “internationalists” who were people not of your country who were prepared to fight for your cause out of principle and conviction. In Angola I met Finns, Brits and Portuguese who had found their homes in Angola supporting the liberation movement. They supported the liberation movement through their understanding and opposition to colonialism and the ills of tribalism and racism that colonialism brings.

There were the Russians and Cubans and East Germans in Angola who were regarded as doing “internationalist duty”. And, in Tanzania there were Brits, Swedes, Danes, Dutch, Irish and Finns who worked alongside and together with ANC members and these people were also regarded as “internationalists”.

In Angola and Tanzania the local ANC leadership would regularly go to great lengths to praise the internationalists and call on us to emulate the kind of sacrifice they had made. I am sure that from time to time the same local leadership also offered thanks to the nationals of the country where we were living but had it not been for the time I spent in Swaziland I would probably remain with the perception that “internationalists” (other than the Cubans) were Europeans and white in colour.

In Swaziland I learnt to work, and live, with Swazis who saw themselves as Swazis, were proud of their nationality, at times apologetic for the undemocratic system in Swaziland and committed to the liberation struggle of South Africans out of a deep understanding about the unfairness of apartheid and possibly out of a hope that freedom in South Africa might bring about a better life for Swazis in future.

Using the terminology democratic

South Africa uses today these Swazis were “Black”, “Coloured” and “White”. Some were from the middle class or even the more wealthy class. Others were tradespeople, students and lecturers. And some were ordinary people who tended their cattle and fowl in rural areas. The Swazis who supported the ANC cause in Swaziland were ordinary people who had families and homes, who wished for a better education for their children or greater chances in the economic life of Swaziland or the region.

Some of the “Black” Swazis had worked in South Africa and experienced the naked racial brutality of the apartheid system. Some of the “Coloureds” were descendants’ of mixed marriages between Swazis and former colonialists. Some of the “Whites” were the descendants of Europeans or “White” South Africans who had settled in Swaziland and made it their home.

A further addition in Swaziland were the South Africans – “Black”, “Coloured” and “White” who had fled South Africa for political, social or economic reasons. These South Africans often provided a bridge or connection with Swazis and life in Swaziland.

It would not be true to argue that all Swazis – of whatever shade or colour – supported the ANC or the anti-apartheid cause. Many Swazis – “Black”, “Coloured” and “White” – saw the ANC and MK as a problem and some actively worked against the ANC and worked with the security forces of the Pretoria regime.

Some Swazis became so notorious in their drive to do the dirty work of Pretoria that some of us wanted to carry out acts of retribution against them. The same can be said of the “White” Rhodesians who had fled a liberated Zimbabwe and settled in Swaziland. This group of people were known for their open support for Pretoria and were unashamedly racist. We had identified some of their houses as “safe houses” of the South African security forces and wanted to carry out our own form of pre-emptive strike. It was only the clear thinking of our commanders and political direction that forced us to focus on what we were in Swaziland to do:

support operations inside South Africa.

When the South African security forces carried out raids on our safe houses we moved into the homes of Swazis. Accommodating us in their homes carried a real and serious danger. On more than one occasion the South African security forces raided a Swazi home long after it had been used by us. They left the dead behind and on occasion took the living for interrogation in South Africa, somehow managing to cross the frontier in the middle of the night, well after the borders had officially closed.

On the borders of Swaziland there were Swazis who had donkeys that we used to carry heavier equipment across the border. This activity can be likened to the support locals gave to partisans in the Second World War and carried the same kind of danger.

At the university, lecturers found space for MK operatives to live and to pretend to be students. The operatives often used the opportunity to recruit students at the university who would then travel legally into South Africa carrying messages, political material or military equipment. On returning, these Swazis would provide reports and information necessary for the conduct of further military and/or political operations in South Africa.

The Swazis provided us with the materials to forge drivers' licences and passports. This they could do by virtue of where they worked; and the risk they knowingly took was that if an MK person broke under interrogation they could be exposed, leading to sanction at work and a South African security force raid at home.

The Swazi internationalists, if we wish to use that term, were the water in which the MK swam like fish. We were at home. They, for all intent and purposes, were our comrades. Some died fighting together with us. Others lost their possessions or suffered sanction from the conservative Swazi government system.

One of the pillars of the ANC's strategy and strongly advocated by O. R. Tambo was to gain international support for the liberation struggle of South Africans. In the wealthy parts of the world, money and resources were mobilised under this strategy. In

academic and political centres positive works were produced and published, bursaries and training were mobilised and provided to the ANC. From the Eastern Bloc military training and weapons were supplied. The former Organisation of the African Union and its Liberation Committee were engaged with at a political level. And, on the ground operatives of the ANC and MK worked together with and mobilised nationals who would actively participate and support political and/or military operations.

I know that ANC and MK operatives in Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and many more countries have had similar experiences to my own in Swaziland. They too found nationals

“With their hallmark arrogance the Pretoria regime trampled on international norms, raiding homes at will and killing anyone they believed to be an “enemy of the state” knowing that the west would issue a statement of “concern” at best.”

of those countries who supported them and others who fought alongside them as comrades-in-arms. And, there were those brave people from the northern hemisphere countries who became our comrades-in-arms smuggling in weapons and money, crossing borders with information and material and taking the same kind of risk we took for a cause that they supported out of a belief and principle.

However, being an African by birth and from my experiences in Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana and Swaziland I tend to look to Africa first. And, when I look back today, almost twenty years after our democracy, it is with some sadness and cynicism. It seems that now we have our freedom,

democracy and our own government we have become focused narrowly on improving our own individual lives and we, as a nation and as individuals, have forgotten some of the people we walked with on the long and hard road to liberation.

I do not discount the value of the odd political speech in Parliament or over a tombstone in one of the neighbouring countries. Neither do I wish to cast any disrespect on the efforts of a few individuals who have tried to establish ways to recognise the contributions of African internationalists. But I do not see real and substantive recognition for the role of African internationalists in our liberation struggle. My children are not taught about this contribution at school, there is no dedicated State system to provide support for those internationalists who lost a father, mother, brother or sister in the liberation struggle.

The populist xenophobic outbursts that we see in South Africa today are not countermanded strongly enough and a great deal more needs to be done to educate our people about the role that other nationals played in achieving our democracy.

If you were a Swazi and your son had been cut down by South African security forces bullets while he stood side by side with an MK commander would you not wonder today for what and why did he die?

I do not believe that we, as a nation, can repay all that has been lost or suffered by our internationalist friends and comrades but I do think that our government, which came to power with the support of internationalists, could set up dedicated programmes to recognise the role that African internationalists have played.

For me, the Swazis we worked with in those difficult and dangerous days of 1985 to 1987 made me learn and understand the real value of those who are prepared to fight for another's cause.

We should always value the role of the internationalists from the northern hemisphere, but we need to focus special attention on the internationalist contribution made by our fellow Africans, especially from the front-line states. ■

Of Guns Under Bums and Secret Safaris



In the early '80s, as the struggle was heating up in South Africa, the ANC approached Mannie with the aim of finding new ways to set up projects to smuggle weapons to the ANC.

By David Max Brown

In 1963 my father, Mannie Brown, drove into a Johannesburg car dealership in my mother's little red Renault to purchase a getaway vehicle.

He was part of the escape committee that organised the break from jail of four of the Rivonia Trialists, Mosie Moolla, Abdulhay Jassat, Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe. The jail break and the getaway was successful but Harold and Arthur had to dump the car in Swaziland and pretty soon the special branch were looking for a man in a little red Renault.

Our house was searched on several occasions and my father, who had already done a stint in jail, went into hiding. My mother fled with her four kids to England, while Mannie stayed

underground in South Africa and attempted to continue to operate within the South African Communist Party under the command of Bram Fischer.

Thinking the atmosphere was cooling off, my mother agreed to bring us all back to South Africa but it was only a few weeks later that the special branch caught up with Mannie again and he had to engineer his own escape with the family following soon after.

Thus my life in England began at the age of four with my twin brother and two older sisters.

Our father worked for several years as a salesman for a factory selling leather skins and my mother as a teacher at a nursery school. Eventually he became

something of an expert with leather and created a small factory at the back of a shop in Finchley from which he developed a successful leather clothing business.

Mannie maintained his relationship with Joe Slovo. They had been friends since meeting at a chemical factory where they worked in Johannesburg in their late teens and continued their relationship as comrades in the South African Communist Party and the ANC until Joe's death in 1995. Mannie died a few years later in 2003.

In the early '80s, as the struggle was heating up in South Africa, the ANC approached Mannie with the aim of finding new ways to set up projects to smuggle weapons to the ANC.

Mannie worked in collaboration with Chris Hani on a project they called the "Tallow Project" (their original handwritten drawings and plans are now in the archive at the Lilieslief Museum). The aim was to build a candle factory in Zimbabwe for which tankers of wax would have to be delivered from South Africa.

On one occasion the tanker would return as if empty but actually full of plastic explosive. The aim was to park the tanker outside the Johannesburg stock exchange and blow it up.

Eventually the operation was called off by the MK commander in chief, Oliver Tambo, who was not convinced that there would be no loss of life in the explosion.

Many of the ANC structures were infiltrated or thought to be so and though thousands of cadres were being trained in Angola very few ever got the chance to cross into South Africa and of the handful who did many of them were caught and killed as they crossed the border or soon after.

Operation "Vula", under the command of Oliver Tambo and Mac Maharaj, was planned in the late '80s to bring MK commanders into the country to train internal units that would in turn pass on their training to other units. The Vula operation smuggled several of the leading MK commanders and a significant amount of weapons into the country. Although about a fifty to a hundred cadres were trained, the Vula structure was detected before it could implement any level of military

success.

Meanwhile Oliver Tambo had tasked Joe Slovo, who involved Mannie Brown, to create a system whereby weapons would be dropped in floating pods from ships off the South African coastline. Cadres were sent to Cuba for training in seafaring and a ship was about to be purchased for the mission; but this plan was dropped when Joe introduced Mannie to a man named Rodney Wilkinson.

Rodney was an after-building designer at the Koeberg Nuclear Reactor near Cape Town. He hated the South African regime and the racism at his workplace and so he decided to take the plans of the nuclear facility to the ANC in Lusaka and provide them with an unexpected gift.

He finally got to meet with Joe Slovo and Mac Maharaj who persuaded Rodney to take a crash course in how to prime and plant a mini-limpet mine. On his return to South Africa Rodney was supplied with three mini-limpet mines which he managed to smuggle through security at Koeberg. The security was intense and methodical for the black workers but laissez-faire for the whites (<http://mg.co.za/article/1995-12-15-how-we-blew-up-koeberg-and-escaped-on-a-bicycle>). After blowing up Koeberg on December 17th 1982, Rodney and his partner Heather Gray, whom he later married, escaped to England.

A few years later, in 1986, Rodney was bored hiding out in London and it seemed that not even the South African special branch suspected him or in fact any of the white workers, unlike the black workers who suffered intense interrogation. Rodney dreamed of driving overland to South Africa and the more he thought about it the more he realised that with some simple modifications to a big Bedford Truck he could smuggle in a ton of weapons under the seats along the way.

Joe Slovo was sceptical of the idea but introduced Rodney to Mannie who immediately saw the value of the design as compared to the expense and unpredictability of the maritime operation.

So was born a collaboration of the most unlikely gun runners who drank copious amounts of whiskey

and laughed long into the night whilst planning and plotting from Mannie's house in Finchley, just a stone's throw from Margaret Thatcher's constituency office.

They opened a bona-fide travel company, "Africa Hinterland" in Greenwich, purchased an old Bedford truck at an auction and converted it to carry passengers with brilliantly concealed hiding places for the weapons under the seats. They shipped the truck to Kenya where it was filled with tourists who had a great holiday from Mombasa to Johannesburg and unwittingly helped to smuggle tons of weapons into the country. No one was ever caught.

“ They opened a bona-fide travel company, “Africa Hinterland” in Greenwich, purchased an old Bedford truck at an auction and converted it to carry passengers with brilliantly concealed hiding places for the weapons under the seats.”

Mannie and Rodney were part of a group of trusted ANC cadres called "The London Traders". Their direct commander was Cassius Maake who was later assassinated in Swaziland, and replaced by Aboobaker Ismail, a.k.a 'Rashid'.

Responsible for the packing of the weapons into the truck were Benno Smith and a few others; 'Calvin' Riaz Saloojee and Muff Anderson, then in their mid-twenties, were tasked with the internal recruitment and distribution of the weapons. The support from the London ANC office was via Aziz Pahad.

This was a team of very different personalities and ages who relied further on British and Dutch recruits to front the Hinterland office. These

included Heather Newham and Jenny Harris; and others who drove the truck, such as Stuart Round, Menno Schroeder, and Mike and Jo Lewis. Volunteers from Canada, the UK and South Africa were used to receive the weapons and distribute them to hiding places around the country. The operation had all the possible odds stacked against it and yet over forty successful missions succeeded between 1986 and 1990.

I grew up in London but during the period that all this was happening I was working for the ANC as a photographer at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania. I later was awarded an ANC scholarship to study film in Canada, and then lived and worked in London and then Swaziland, moving to South Africa in 2000.

It was only in 1995 that my father disclosed to me what he had been doing. I was completely surprised by the news and a little dismayed that as a serving member of the ANC I was not privy to this big family secret.

My mother had been typing up the correspondence and secret codes, my brother had supplied a safe house to the drivers in London, I think my sisters also knew something of the operation and the danger to the family if anyone was caught.

Listening in 1995 to my father's account of the project I immediately saw the potential of the story for a documentary film and though it took me five years to raise the money and locate the original Hinterland guns truck, the film *The Secret Safari* was made in 2001. It went on to screen around the world and won the Dendy Award in Australia and other accolades.

Finding the passengers who had travelled on the Africa Hinterland truck was difficult, but one passenger led to another and some of the drivers still had passenger lists. Finding the truck was a little more daunting.

In August 1990, Nelson Mandela appeared on national and international television to make the announcement that the armed struggle would be halted and the movement of armed cadres and weapons into South Africa would stop. That decision was respected by all concerned. However due to the violence visited

upon civilians in parts of Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal by elements of the apartheid security apparatus and armed militants operating under the banner of Inkatha the London Traders were asked unofficially to continue to bring weapons into the country to arm the self defence units set up to protect the affected communities.

It was at this point that the team took the audacious decision to set up shop in Johannesburg and instead of a six week tour from Kenya to offer a two week round trip via Botswana and Zimbabwe. The weapons were collected in Bulawayo. The trips were sold to mainly South African tourists and were frequent between 1990 and October 1993 when the project closed.

In 1991 the operation came to a literal standstill as the engine of the old Bedford truck finally gave up. The driver at the time, Menno Schroeder, paged through the Yellow Pages to find someone who could fix it or sell him a replacement. He stumbled upon "The Pretoria Truck Farm" and found its owner to be a large jovial gentleman who not only sold him a replacement Bedford but also helped to extend the chassis and move the canopy, replete with hidden compartments to the new truck.

Then in 1993, when the operation was closed, Menno went home to the Netherlands and left the truck in the hands of the owner of the Pretoria Truck Farm. Unknown to Menno the owner was none other than Witold Walus, the brother to Janus Walus who assassinated Chris Hani in April of that year!

If I were to get the truck and restore it for the dramatic reconstructions in the documentary I would have to negotiate with the enemy.

I met with Witold in 1998 and he took me on a tour of his 'farm'.

On almost every inch of grass were military vehicles, even missiles and tanks. It was a veritable graveyard and amongst this sombre array of military memorabilia was the Africa Hinterland Truck, with its torn sail and rusty wheels looking remarkably out of place and dwarfed by the machinery around it.

I explained to Witold why the truck was special. He wanted to charge me

R98,000 in unpaid storage costs which I couldn't afford and so he asked me to find out if I could get the SANDF to swap the truck for a second world war tank.

I contacted my friend Damian de Lange who had been in the ANC and active in MK, and was by then a General working closely with the head of the army, General Siphwe Nyanda and somehow they found a tank that we could swap! However it turned out to be prohibitively expensive to transport a 40-ton tank to Pretoria and so I had no alternative but to go back to Witold to renegotiate.

When I got back to the farm Witold had taken a large hammer to the seat mechanism of the Africa Hinterland truck and smashed one of the seats in his attempt to uncover the hiding place for the weapons.

Witold was very angry that he had been unwittingly involved in supporting an ANC operation and so he insisted that I go to the ANC to pay for the storage. I explained that the ANC was very embarrassed about the film since it would be revealed that they used innocent tourists as the cover and suddenly Witold saw his chance of a political 'payback'. He asked me what I could afford and soon I found myself writing him a cheque for R15,000 and towing the truck away to a place of safety the very next day.

Fred Baron, who had secretly been involved in fixing the truck during its smuggling days volunteered to help get the truck back on the road and we brought one of the original drivers, Stuart Round, over from the UK to assist and take part in the film. We drove the old truck for two thousand kilometres around the country while filming the re-enacted scenes for the documentary.

At the end of the filming process I donated the truck to a permanent exhibition at Lilieslief Farm Museum, the site of the Rivonia arrests in 1963.

What was strange, and remarkably has never been explained, is that just three days before we started filming I received a phone call from the then ANC secretary general Kgalema Motlanthe, who told me that my letter of support from the ANC was to be rescinded and instructed me that this

project was to remain a secret and that the filming should halt.

I was shocked and quite scared. My co-producer from Australia caught the next flight home, my production manager developed a sudden illness. People were genuinely worried about the repercussions of defying not just the ANC but also its leadership.

I decided that I had to continue to make the film and it was completed in 2001. Unfortunately without the highest ANC approval and protection some of the major operatives in the project were unable to feature in the film.

I am now working on the feature film script of this story. Soon we will begin the journey to find investors and to raise the finance required for the film, which has the working title - *The Unlikely Gun Runner*.

The legacy of the Africa Hinterland project remains and I am particularly happy that the documentary was made and that the truck is now on display.

What saddens me is that the collaborative non-racial spirit of the ANC that allowed comrades of all races to work together and to trust each other seems to be dissipating.

Steve Biko also spoke eloquently of a future that seems to be slipping further every day from the realms of possibility, when he said *We believe that in our country there shall be no minority and there shall be no majority, there shall just be people.... So in a sense it will be a completely non-racial, egalitarian society. We believe it is the duty of the vanguard political movement, which brings about change, to educate people's outlooks.*

Surely our leadership and the country as a whole should be driven by a collaborative culture that aims towards nation building and the common purpose of a democratic and equitable society in which South Africa can truly belong to all who live in it? That is the ANC that I grew up in and to which I pledged my allegiance but which sadly I feel is also dissipating.

There is much to do and so I hope that the work I do as a filmmaker will contribute in some way to this nation building that is so essential, now, more than ever. ■

Build the Cadre for the National Democratic Revolution



In the final analysis, cadres of the developmental state should be jealously moulded and groomed by the ANC and the revolutionary alliance in South Africa to push the line of the movement in government without fail.

By Bongani Mkongi

The task of economic transformation in South Africa is complex and multi-faceted. It is difficult and daunting because of its deep-rootedness in the economic and political history of our country dating back to the introduction of European mercantilism in the 17th century and the resulting proletarianisation of labour and commercialisation of agriculture.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, successive laws were passed which entrenched systemic exclusion of black people from both the body-politic and the formal economy of South Africa. Alongside this racialisation of the country and the economy, various measures such as import substituting industrialisation, incentives, preferential treatment and

procurement were implemented. This created white monopoly capital in various industries and sectors especially those linked to the minerals and military industrial complex. As the white population's standards of living and wealth increased, poverty and inequality deepened for blacks, resulting in the creation of colonialism of a special type.

The Department of Trade and Industry's Small Business in SA observes: "while small business in developed countries contribute around 50 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), those in Asia contribute around 40 percent. In South Africa small business contributes only 30 percent to the GDP, 70-80 percent in employment, but less than 4 percent to export earnings".

This sorry state of our small businesses' lack of contribution to our GDP can be ascribed to the slow pace of transformation in the economy of South Africa. The slow pace of de-racialising the South African economy hinders the contribution of the majority of South Africans to economic growth.

Our challenge is that white business people are bombarded with negative information about how bad it is to allow more and more black people into the economy. The strategic integration and participation of black people in the economy is undermined by the use of emotive terminology like the spin given to the expression 'tenderpreneurs' by the media. Our black business people who are making an honest contribution to the South African economy are continuously insulted and by implication accused of having entered the economic space through corrupt means.

The de-racialisation of the South African economy has a long-term positive benefit for the white capital in our country. If the economy became fully non-racial, white business would no longer face a sustained threat from a ticking-time-bomb of unemployment, poverty and deepening inequality. It is going to take a collective effort from both black and white capital to create employment and fight poverty. The scourge of unemployment cannot be blamed on white capital alone.

The ANC National Conference correctly resolved in this second phase of the transition to effect economic transformation and fundamental democratic consolidation with the aim of eradicating poverty, creating full employment and reducing inequality, leading to the creation of a national democratic society. This is the call to fast track the transformation of the

economy by, among other things, de-racialising it.

The movement gave this mandate to all its cadres to ensure that we embrace the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP) – Vision 2030 – as our guide for united action towards the realisation of a truly non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

In addition the legal, practical and psychological barriers created by apartheid and patriarchy should be broken down, so as to open up the economy to give opportunities to those who have historically been excluded. We must move with speed on the restructuring of the South African economy on the basis of new, comprehensive and sustainable growth and development strategies in all sectors.

“The ANC utilised the term cadre policy or deployment with an understanding that the strength of any revolutionary movement lies not only in numbers, but, primarily in the quality of its cadres.”

The state should unashamedly continue with its historic responsibility to de-racialise our economy and break the backbone of 'white monopoly capital'. They must radically improve the economic and financial status of the 'black capital', improve their savings and investment capabilities in order to grow in size and in strength to contest the established 'white monopoly capital'.

These cadres should advance and translate socio-economic policies into achievable programmes of the state to build a better life and equal opportunity for all South Africans. They must be able to engage this challenging task to change the balance of socio-economic forces in favour of

the poor and working masses even in the face of attacks from those who do not want change.

The forces of anti-change and anti-transformation are arrogantly determined to interrupt all such efforts. Together with other opposition forces in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, they are determined to undermine any attempt towards the creation of a truly national democratic society.

This arrogance and posture is witnessed by our people in their daily lives through the conduct of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Freedom Front Plus (FFP) as well as the AfriForum including Solidarity. The continuous challenging and disapproval of all Cabinet decisions to reconstruct South Africa and those of Parliament to speed up transformation is a case in point. Rulings by our courts of law in this country against some progressive pieces of legislation are also a matter of concern.

It is important to unpack the concept of 'cadre deployment' beyond the distorted insinuations lurking behind the phrase, which imply getting a job through ANC connections. It is correct to say that the term 'cadre deployment' and 'cadre policy' is derived from the ANC lexicon. The ANC utilised the term cadre policy or deployment with an understanding that the strength of any revolutionary movement lies not only in numbers, but, primarily in the quality of its cadres. One of the basic challenges the movement is facing in this second phase of the transition is a full implementation of its coherent cadre development programme; this is the systematic education, instruction and training of the cadres of the ANC to fulfil important tasks in South Africa.

The ANC without shame needs to build and train its own cadres for deployment to the state, economy and civil society using an effective, coherent and systematic cadre deployment policy; a policy that would avoid misdeployment of cadres and include the political and physical preservation of skilled cadres in the movement.

The cadre policy of the ANC should include all our members who are deployed in government, business

and civil society. The ANC should deliberately construct 'a cadre of the democratic state'; a public service cadre; a 'revolutionary bureaucrat' as well as the 'cadre of economic transformation' including a 'cadre of developmental civil society' which is committed to promote the objective of the National Democratic Revolution and the developmental state. A cadre of the democratic developmental state should be capable of planning and executing service delivery in this context.

President Jacob Zuma in his letter to public servants said "In today's global and competitive world, a country's success is determined by many things. Key among these is a patriotic, effective and efficient cadre of public servants that translates government policies and programmes into tangible benefits".

The ANC has always placed the importance of political education and training of its members as well as thorough academic excellence by sending (for decades in exile) many of its cadres and leaders to selected schools, colleges and universities across the world in order to build a movement of both organic and academic intellectuals.

Hence, the 53rd ANC National Conference resolved that this Decade of the Cadre should be buttressed by a protracted programme to develop and transform most ANC members into activists and cadres who will be at the cutting edge of the on-going struggle for fundamental political, social, and economic transformation of our country.

In the spirit of the 'principle of selectivity', the ANC should select the best from its new members to graduate into the coherent and systematic cadre development programme and education. The 53rd ANC National Conference agreed unanimously to safeguard the core values of the ANC and NDR. The promotion of our core values should be undertaken within the context of the ideological and political struggles to cultivate progressive values among members of the ANC and all South Africans as part of building a national democratic society.

These cadres should possess the qualities that include personal and

political discipline, humility, modesty, a commitment to serve the nation, a commitment to an all-round self-improvement, criticism and self-criticism, national, class and gender consciousness and commitment to organisational discipline, collective and organisational processes.

In the final analysis, the movement should train and educate cadres to become complete and whole persons. This education and training of cadres must be geared at building their strategic perspective in order to provide strong organisational and ideological platforms for the cause of the ANC, NDR, pan-Africanism and the empowerment and emancipation of women.

“The de-racialisation of the South African economy has a long-term positive benefit for the white capital in our country. If the economy became fully non-racial, white business would no longer face a sustained threat from a ticking-time-bomb of unemployment, poverty and deepening inequality.”

Concretely, the ANC must have its Party Political School; it must be the highest institution of higher learning for training of its middle and high level leading cadres in society, state and economy. One group after another of outstanding cadres of the movement should graduate from this ANC School. It should be a symbol of commitment on the part of the ANC and broader movement to strengthen and improve the quality of its cadres.

If the movement wants to build a strong developmental state, it should deliberately go to schools, universities and Institutions of Higher Learning to

recruit the best students for its cadre development programme. Political Schools of the ANC should be centres of academic excellence; and political and ideological instruction. The ANC should deliberately groom students especially university and college graduates in different fields and prepare them to take over from the existing cadreship of the developmental state. By registering in the ANC or Party School, university and college students and graduates should know that they are enlisting in the army of cadres that are going to assist the movement in planning, monitoring and evaluation of the state service delivery programmes and policy. They should be determined to implement the policy of radical socio-economic transformation in South Africa.

The ANC must boldly recruit these comrades into junior positions in the state for orientation in the workings of the state. They should understand the basic principles of governance and public administration as well as introduction into basic planning and economic principles. After satisfactory completion of their primary tasks in government and the state these young cadres should be promoted into more responsible and challenging tasks that include strategic thinking/planning, systems thinking, organisational development, finance, risk management, and many more. The movement should do this with an aim to deploy these young cadres into positions of Assistant Directors, Deputy Directors, Directors, Chief Directors, DDGs and DGs.

This will allow the ANC, our glorious movement, to continue to produce men and women who will carry on the cause of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) started by the older generation of the ANC. This will help the ANC to enable the next generation will preserve the values of the ANC and the broader democratic movement in South Africa and the world over.

In the final analysis, cadres of the developmental state should be jealously moulded and groomed by the ANC and the revolutionary alliance in South Africa to push the line of the movement in government without fail. ■

RECRUITS MEET AT THE LSE



Reliving the South African Struggle in London

There were moving stories from the recruits about their adventures and fears. Only a few had ever left their country. Some had never even flown in planes before.

By Danny Schechter

London: Thomas Wolfe wrote “You Can’t Go Home Again” years ago, and its core truth keeps popping up in my life even as I tend to retrace some of my life journeys, in an endless walk down memory lane.

I am back in London, cold and wet as I remember it, to attend an event honoring those of us who went to South Africa on underground missions at my mid 1960s alma mater, The London School of Economics and

Political Science. I was on political side of the College’s split personality back in 1966-68.

This event marked my real “major” in what the Rolling Stones called “street fighting years”: imagining world revolution.

Our group of solidarity stalwarts is now called The London Recruits. There is now a book out from Merlin Press telling our story in the words of many participants, including myself.

Yes, I was an activist in those pre-journalism years, blamed by some in the then Fleet Street press for sparking the LSE’s student “troubles” that soon morphed into an occupation and dramatic student protest. They dubbed me “Danny the Yank,” in the spirit of the French Press that labeled Dany Cohn-Bendit, a student activist in Paris who sparked a real revolution as “Dany le Rouge (Danny the Red).”

In the mid 1960s the African

National Congress (ANC) was all but smashed by the Apartheid state. Mandela began his life sentence on Robben Island in 1964 along with his fellow leaders, all convicted of sabotage in the infamous Rivonia Trial. They all expected to be hanged; after sentencing, they expected to die there. Mandela would not be released for 27 years.

Thousands more were later brutalised and rounded up. The resistance movement seemed crushed although top leaders like Oliver Tambo, Yusuf Dadoo and Joe Slovo and many militants were sent or escaped into exile in Africa and London where they spent decades plotting and organising their way back.

With their movement on the run, the ANC decided to recruit non-South Africans, mostly British communists, socialists, anti-apartheid activists and this one American civil rights worker, to go on missions into South Africa to distribute flyers promoting the ANC, through the use of leaflet bombs to stir the people and the local press.

I was one of the first to take part in this scary and desperate effort to keep the ANC visible at a low point in its 100 year history. This effort went on for five years while the ANC rebuilt its internal structures and armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (the Spear of the Nation.)

Later, some of these recruits got into weapons smuggling by setting up a safari company that could cross borders. Some 40 tons of weapons were moved that way, we were told at the event.

Two of my colleagues, unknown to me at the time because of secrecy and compartmentalisation, were arrested and jailed. I was naïve about the dangers at the time.

As we were meeting at the LSE talking about people from one country acting on behalf of people in another, there was a news flash. Israel, a country known for chauvinism and arrogance was apologising and promising compensation for the killings of 9 Turks intercepted on the high seas by the Israeli Navy which boarded and stopped a humanitarian flotilla to Gaza some years back.

At the time, Tel Aviv's propaganda machine blamed the victims for the

crime, and Israel insisted it would never apologise.

Turkey, considered one of Israel's friends, denounced their intervention, and broke relations. Now, to re-establish trade and diplomatic links, Israel has done what it swore it would never do – reversed itself in an act of contrition, reportedly brokered by a then visiting Barack Obama.

In some ways it was like the apartheid government finally succumbing to world pressure and negotiating with the ANC, a movement that it had denounced for years as terrorists.

Back at the Little Theatre at the LSE where I held forth in many a fierce debate back in the day, there were moving stories from the recruits about their adventures and fears. Only a few

“I was one of the first to take part in this scary and desperate effort to keep the ANC visible at a low point in its 100 year history. This effort went on for five years while the ANC rebuilt its internal structures and armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe.”

had ever left their country. Some had never even flown in planes before.

Many were working class blokes of the left persuasion who signed on at the inspirational urging of Ronnie Kasrils, then a part of the underground and later South Africa's outspoken Minister of Intelligence.

Kasrils spoke to his “alumni association” of once young recruits, his “army” of infiltrators and preached the message of the value of international solidarity. This was an example of an initiative that worked.

He is now active on behalf of the Palestinian cause and increasingly critical of the current ANC leadership. He has certainly earned the right to speak out.

On one of my trips to South Africa, I

visited him in his spy shop that featured pictures of Fidel Castro on the wall, and gifts from visiting intelligence chiefs including high-ups in the CIA and FBI that once tracked him. (His first book was called “Armed and Dangerous.”)

Unfortunately, the event was poorly promoted, some believe, even sabotaged by the LSE's current Administration that had been caught up in a scandal after it was revealed that the school took money from Gaddafi.

It is also possible that our gang of grey-haired old timers were just not aware that that our event was scheduled on the last day of the term with many students eager to leave town. A nasty London-style rain shower and freezing weather were not exactly conducive to drawing a crowd.

One Palestinian student, one of fifteen or more undergrads that came, because of sponsorship by the LSE Student Union, spoke up. Only 30% of LSE student body is now from the UK, probably because of unaffordable fees. (Ironically, the economists that the School graduated are now presiding over Britain's failing economy.)

The student asked if we had ever feared that our gesture of support could backfire and hurt the very people we went to help, a query reflective of the cynicism of these times, and an implied critique of the “white man's burden” that did so much to harm Africa in the guise of helping it to develop.

Some of the recruits responded by reminding everyone they were invited. But others admitted that they too were initially wary, but went ahead anyway – and are now proud to have done so.

The two recruits who were jailed have since won medals from the South African government.

Meanwhile, back at the LSE's Economist book store, the featured volume in the window speaks to a crisis that I am sure owes some of its origins to the conservative market-based capitalist doctrines taught in an institution founded by Fabian socialists.

The book is not by a Brit but by the American economist Paul Krugman who once taught here. Its title is more like demand with the moral urgency that we once brought to the fight against apartheid:

“END THIS DEPRESSION, NOW!” ■

The misleading terminology of South Africa's public discourse



The nomenclature of our political discourse has become overlain with emotive sub-text messages to the extent that the language of affirmation, of comradeship, of solidarity (such as cadres, economic freedom and entrepreneurs) has changed colour to become the language of dissing one another.

By Busani Ngcaweni

In the on-going battle of ideas in South Africa, an unfortunate nomenclature (characterisation of things and people) has evolved and become established in our public discourse. I call it unfortunate because, first, most of this new terminology is applied as pejoratives designed to disrespect opponents. Second, the new language may be popular in the public discourse yet it does not necessarily position our country in the advancement of semiotics or improve communication. Nor does it qualitatively broaden frontiers of

public discourse in a manner that revitalises Mao Zedong's injunction to let a thousand flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend.

For ease of reference, let us discuss a few examples.

Tenderpreneurs

It is now customary to refer and relate to emerging black business people and contractors as tenderpreneurs. This is not a compliment. It is a pejorative term that raises suspicion and suggests that black business people doing business with the state rely on rent-seeking

and corruption to secure contracts. The term carries a connotation that a parasitic class of black entrepreneurs has emerged with the sole purpose of looting public coffers.

This symbol is not used to affirm the correctness of state policies that promote economic empowerment and enterprising blacks in particular. It subjugates the black contractor into the space where, in Oswald Mtshali's terms, "he is always a suspect", for he is not capable of doing 'legitimate' business with the state unless there is an improper relationship with an 'insider'. Images and stories of 'corrupt' black contractors universalise the tenderpreneurship pejorative. Those accused become the norm rather than exception in the pool of honest, hard-working and enterprising blacks.

That such an orthographic description has set in is rather sad. But what makes it worse is that it germinated right inside our progressive movement, in the on-going battle for ideological hegemony. Therefore it cannot be attributed to the bourgeois offensive and what I call Residual Resentment. The latter refers to the persistence of questioning black people's capacity and their ability to make sound moral judgements.

As it happens in political science classes today, where most students think of the popular American clothing label when asked about a banana republic, soon students will be saying tenderpreneurs are 'corrupt' black contractors.

Economic Freedom Fighters

More recently, some flamboyant deceivers have self-styled themselves as economic freedom fighters. This reference seeks to lay claim to a moral authority over the Freedom Charter in particular and the national democratic revolution in general. This ill-fated misappropriation seeks to delegitimise the intentions and efforts of the ANC and the broader congress movement which led the Freedom Charter development process. Of course I am in no way suggesting that the ANC has copyright or monopoly over the concept of economic freedom for this political idea is as old as the struggle against colonialism.

This new term is at best populist and at worst ahistorical. Its strategic intent is inversion - not its face-value meaning. It doesn't mean we are here to offer a solution, new ideas. Although vacillating between vulgarity and subtleties, it says we are here to 'save' the Freedom Charter from those who have 'sold out'.

Earlier I said this is ahistorical. That is precisely because it alienates the form and content of the term economic freedom fighter from its strategic historical and philosophical base. One wonders whether those who appropriate this term appreciate that revolutionaries like Bhambatha ka Mancinza died struggling for the economic freedom of the African people who were being subjected to unjust colonial taxes that were meant to benefit colonial administrators and the settler communities they sought to serve.

In effect, what these charlatans are saying is that everything that the ANC is doing is the anti-thesis of the struggle for economic freedom as envisaged in the Africans' Claims and the Freedom Charter.

But we've been down that road before. Remember people used to be branded 'charterists' if they supported the Freedom Charter. More recently, a party of angry men emerged and collapsed immediately after its failed attempt to position itself as the true guardians and custodians of the Freedom Charter. In the end history will be the judge.

Cadre deployment

This is another addition to our political terminology whose meaning and strategic intent has changed. Cadre deployment is a term derived from the ANC's policy and system of identifying individuals with appropriate skills and placing them in positions where their skills will be optimally utilised, especially within the state, in its broadest manifestation. Within the movement the term asserts the transformation imperative. Secondly, it affirms those being deployed as cadres who carry the responsibility of advancing the transformation project. It presupposes the knowledge of being a deployed cadre inspires individuals to

see their mandates beyond the ordinary routines and attainment of quantitative targets. Used in its proper context, the term imposes a moral obligation on individuals concerned who, at all material times, should evince the values and principles enshrined in the constitution, in the pursuit of building a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

Unfortunately, due to the accumulated disabilities of skills shortages, and manifestations of sins of incumbency, service delivery has suffered. Instead of correctly identifying sources of service delivery shortfalls (including limited inter-governmental coordination, skills shortages and malpractice), we have been made to believe that the problem is the cadre deployment policy.

To be blunt, legitimate causes of service delivery delays in a transitional state are attributed to the ruling party. When a state official overspends, it's because of cadre deployment! When a police officer crashes a police vehicle, it's cadre deployment! When a hospital runs out of aspirins, it is all because of cadre deployment! This however, ignores a fundamental fact that the current democratic state inherited a bloated bureaucracy, as a result of sunset clauses during the negotiation period. Most of the inefficiencies of the state are also rooted in the ineptitude inherited from the apartheid regime which had no culture for service and excellence for the benefit of all citizens.

Unfortunately, like predators in the Masai Mara crossing, the opposition and some in the media have been quick to dismember cadre deployment. In its decapitated state, it now means corruption, incompetence, nepotism and service delivery failure.

To the extent that blacks constitute the majority of those joining the public service and state owned enterprises, black managers are now regarded as semi-qualified and near-corrupt deployed cadres irrespective of their competency and achievement. For example, when you talk to people at airport lounges and tell them that you work for the state, the common refrain would be "Oh you also work for government, who do you know there?" This cynically implies that without

cadre deployment you wouldn't be working there. You are there as a product of nepotism and you might, as soon as the opportunity presents itself, misappropriate state resources.

This bigoted view has become rife in our public discourse. We make so bold as to suggest that it is bigoted because in the majority of cases, it is black managers whom, if they are found on the wrong side of the audit report, are said to have failed because of cadre deployment.

And so what ought to have been a language of affirmation has become a pejorative that demotivates, demeans and suspects people of wrong doing. It erodes their agency and they begin to doubt themselves.

At the heart of this discourse and the development of this negative terminology is the desire to exclude black people from full economic participation, especially in positions of responsibility, thus maintaining the status quo of unequal economic relations.

It also means the state's capacity to deliver on its mandate of changing the lives of the people for the better is dealt a heavy blow or is undermined as it becomes difficult for the state to attract the best individuals to serve it as no one will want to be associated with the stigma attached to being a civil servant.

In conclusion, we reassert here that the nomenclature of our political discourse has become overlain with emotive sub-text messages to the extent that the language of affirmation, of comradeship, of solidarity (such as cadres, economic freedom and entrepreneurs) has changed colour to become the language of dissing one another. This threatens national unity and social cohesion.

In the end, societies become what they imagine themselves to be. Once narratives that demean, cast aspersions on individuals based on perceived ideological differences take root, it will be very difficult to root them out of our national imagination, public discourse and consciousness. Psychologists tell us, if you constantly tell a child that he or she is stupid, that is what that child will eventually become! ■

New aphorisms can only reflect the good, the bad and ugly of the new SA

(A response to Busani Ngcaweni)



The recent case of the collusion of big corporations in the construction industry further demonstrates that tenderpreneurship has many white players who seem more sophisticated in the crime than their black counterparts.

By Gugu Ndima

I recall reading *Black Diamonds*, a book written by Zakes Mda, a fiction story attempting to narrate life for the black middle class stratum inter alia, in the current dispensation. The

title of the book was the initial captive as this title has been loosely used to designate the black middle class in South Africa, given its emergence as a result of democracy.

Democracy has indeed brought about significant vicissitudes, not just in the context of standards of living but also on how we communicate, new terms to describe new traits, ideas and beliefs of a new generation which has emerged from the nation; and at times ingenious suppositions to describe developments in the democratic dispensation. These conceptions include of course, 'rainbow nation' and 'Ubuntu' (which is now a term even entrenched in Corporate South Africa, giving the country a much unified basis for fundamental principles); the list is endless. This is a stark reflection of the diverse character of our country.

We should equally acknowledge concerted efforts made by the ANC-led government to use nation building methods such as sports in order to forge unity and further harness democracy. There are now commonalities on how the X and Y generation interact thanks to these terms such as china (friend), darkie (black), etc. They are in abundance and are evidence of an embryonic society gradually shedding off certain conservative stereotypes. This unity however still largely borders on social tolerance and not necessarily racial and gender harmony.

No one can undermine the reimbursements of democracy, more especially the transformation it has brought about in order to tackle the status quo of the economy. This includes the empowerment of the black majority and ensuring that its members take their rightful place in the mainstream of the economy.

However in the same breath we cannot undermine the level of resistance which has been received by the ANC-led government as it seeks to redress the injustices of the past. One recalls the effervescent campaign which was led by the then leader of the Democratic Alliance, Tony Leon, entitled "fight back" which insinuated from the onset that this black government would undoubtedly fail. However almost twenty years into our democracy we have actually seen transformation and evident improvement of the lives of many, many of whom were previously excluded by the same

conservatives as well as other reactionary elements.

This obdurate attitude towards government in some circles has given rise to other verbiage used at times to chastise government and successful black communities (the belittling undertones on BBEE and AA).

Now it would be naïve to assume that the birth of democracy meant a reciprocating death of racism and segregationist attitudes advocated by groups and organisations in our society that are still hell-bent on destroying any possible progress made by the current government. Lest we forget that such agent provocateurs are within our midst, they are in the private sector, government (recalling that we started off as a government of national unity) and organised groups including some with very powerful networks internationally and in key strategic sectors of the economy.

These attitudes sadly have not withered away with the apartheid generation but seemingly they continue to disseminate to even the younger generation which has not experienced that draconian government. Certain stereotypes about government or its alleged failures are widespread; these perceptions, like corruption for example, seem to find sensationalist echoes on very powerful media platforms. They give the narrow and distorted impression that corruption was introduced by the current government and that all things debauched, unscrupulous and immoral are a new phenomenon, forgetting that it was actually this government that led our people to freedom and tackled an intractable system of racism and prejudice.

Democracy however has also given rise to unintended consequences. The introduction of policies such as black economic empowerment, affirmative action and employment equity required a rapid response from the private sector to comply.

Given the skewed nature of our economy which has confined blacks to trivial employment a lot of companies were sceptical about hiring blacks (Africans in particular). This compelled government to impose quotas etc.; including ensuring

that blacks became participants in business.

Government remains the biggest consumer in the economy and therefore there were certain compliance requirements compelling business to involve blacks in management and shareholding; this gave rise to fronting, malicious compliance and the ascension of politically connected people to key positions on boards etc. Sadly this was a necessary evil for government as Corporate SA was not a willing entity in driving transformation, given that they had immensely benefited from severe exploitation of the African majority from previous governments.

“There were certain compliance requirements compelling business to involve blacks in management and shareholding; this gave rise to fronting, malicious compliance and the ascension of politically connected people to key positions on boards etc.”

In attempting to fast-track this and giving blacks economic entry, some beneficiaries of tenders abused good intentions by their actions. This included inflating prices, compromising quality and giving government a bad name. Now as a result, the General-Secretary of the SACP, Blade Nzimande, coined such perverse accumulators of wealth “state-tenderpreneurs”.

He cautioned against such crass materialists, indicating that government had become their cash cow and that they compromised service delivery to the people. He also warned against the dangers of “tenderising” the state to the detriment of the people. Blade Nzimande has also publicly chastised white corporations and big capital for merely utilising black

business as sub-contractors or for fronting.

This term became a serious bone of contention, as it potentially insinuated that blacks doing business with the state are inherently failures or crooks. However this couldn't be farther from the truth; people who speak truth to power should not be limited to elitist media houses; even politicians should be frank in their criticism. This is what the GS did; even Zwelinzima Vavi joined in conceptualising the phenomenon and coined a term for such people: ‘hyenas’.

It is dangerous to assume that by virtue of being black you are inherently progressive; it is equally naïve to assume that by virtue of being white you are immune to corruption and inherently moral. These are some of the distortions we now see erupt in the public discourse and they could potentially defeat the ultimate objective of the National Democratic Revolution.

Tenderpreneurship actually is a historical practice dating from the time of colonialism and apartheid. The perception of blacks being inherently incompetent in actual fact is exacerbated by the media and not necessarily by leaders within our ranks, although Ngcaweni might be making a different point.

The recent case of the collusion of big corporations in the construction industry further demonstrates that tenderpreneurship has many white players who seem more sophisticated in the crime than their black counterparts. In spite of this, the self-anointed corruption police (the media) seem very selective about whom they expose and when.

However, I do agree with Ngcaweni that careless labelling and vile narrow definition of new terms to describe certain practices could end up giving people the same proverbial coat of paint. Yet let us embrace the new amusing aphorisms describing Mzansi (another word I have grown fond of) at times not necessarily jovial but punting truth in some of the new practises we now witness in our hard earned democracy. ■

Future Leaders reality TV show continues SAB's campaign to curb underage drinking



South African Breweries

The South African Breweries' (SAB) 'You Decide' programme, launched in 2012, with the aim of curbing underage drinking, has moved into its next phase with the creation of a reality TV show entitled

Future Leaders.

The new 13-part reality TV show debuted on SABC 1 on Tuesday 5th November at 10pm and will run in parallel with road shows that directly engage teenagers around the country

about underage drinking and the consequences and dangers of this.

'You Decide' is a successful public private partnership between SAB, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the Department

of Trade and Industry (DTI). To date, the campaign has taken the message of the negative consequences of teenage drinking to close to 500 000 learners in almost 1000 schools.

Future Leaders features the lives of five ordinary teenagers from different walks of life in South Africa who have previously experimented with alcohol. The teenagers' awareness of the devastation underage drinking has caused in their communities inspires them to make a real difference and become role models for their peers.

The series follows their real life adventures as they bring to life their decision to stop drinking alcohol, turn their lives around and create practical sustainable projects that will curb underage drinking in their communities. Their desire to pursue their dreams with the help of parents, teachers, broader community members, relevant NGOs and government institutions, comes with many trials and tribulations, which hold valuable life lessons for them and the audience.

The five Future Leaders are Nkosana Banda from Gauteng; Thobile Phantshi from KwaZulu-Natal; Tayla Tomlinson from the Eastern Cape; Ndimphiwe

Lwande from Mpumalanga and Chriszelda Booysen from the Free State.

Each of them is mentored and coached by a finalist of the highly successful and popular One Day Leader programme on SABC 1. The mentors are in turn guided about their responsibilities by well-known marketer, columnist and blogger, Khaya Dlanga. Throughout the series, the Future Leaders will have the opportunity to meet and be assisted by various celebrities and influential people who will be helping them with the skills required as they journey to become leaders in their respective communities.

SAB's Executive Director of Corporate Affairs and Transformation Vincent Maphai believes it is incumbent upon all stakeholders that share concerns about the unacceptable levels of underage drinking, to work together to eradicate this scourge. "We are committed to playing our role as a responsible corporate citizen, as well as the largest liquor manufacturer in the country, to ensure we minimise alcohol abuse harm. The underage consumption of liquor ultimately

threatens the future growth and development of our communities and our country," said Maphai.

He added that one of the key factors for success in fighting underage drinking was ensuring that teenagers are encouraged and recognised for the work that they do to improve the communities in which they live. "Teenagers who are supported by informed teachers, parents, community members and their peers are able to make more positive choices in their lives, not only around abstaining from alcohol, but also by contributing positively to the betterment of others in their community," Maphai continued.

Research shows that teenagers who use alcohol are three times more likely to be involved in violent crimes. Statistics also indicate that 67% of teens who drink before the age of 15 will go on to use illegal drugs - they are 22 times more likely to use marijuana, and 50 times more likely to use cocaine.

The Executive Chairperson of the NYDA Yershen Pillay believes whilst the statistics may be alarming, teenagers may not be aware of the extent to which underage drinking places them in danger. "It's important to continue to discourage teenagers from drinking and abusing liquor as this puts their lives at risk. This could include engaging in unprotected sexual activities and in the process exposing themselves to the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, as well as potentially engaging in crime and violence," said Pillay.

Future Leaders Transmission times are Tuesdays at 10pm on SABC 1, with a repeated on Sundays at 12h30pm.■

For further information on the You Decide underage drinking programme: @DoStuffZA
Facebook.com/You Decide
#DoStuffZA

BACKGROUND:

- The You Decide underage drinking programme encompasses a series of activities designed to demonstrate to teens that the choices they make now can impact on their future prospects positively or negatively. The programme includes a series of school visits, which incorporate an interactive industrial theatre performance on the consequences of underage drinking based on recognisable social settings for teenagers. It is left to teens now armed with knowledge on the negative consequences of underage drinking, as well as techniques to resist undue peer pressure, to decide for themselves.
- Results of similar campaigns in Europe and America conducted by ICAP, the International Centre for Alcohol Policies, suggest that strategies focused on any one of the factors that might prove useful in curbing underage drinking are not nearly as effective as a combination strategy. Their analysis concludes that multiple interventions provide meaningful additional benefit over single ones.

FACTS & FIGURES

- You Decide has helped generate an 8.3% (in relative terms) drop in teen drinking in communities touched
- 891 schools have been visited in five provinces by You Decide
- 489 146 learners have received the You Decide message face-to-face
- The You Decide programme reaches teens and communities through taxi activations, murals, community workshops and many more touch points
- The two main drivers of teen drinking are: 1. Social acceptance; 2. Escape from worries (home and personal)
- In some provinces (like Gauteng*) 86% of teens as young as 14 are drinking.

* YRU/UNISA Substance Abuse Survey, 2012



THROUGH A CREATIVE LENS



By Baleka Mbetse

Here we are
in the company of your presence made so palpable by
your absence.

Since your Departure we have tried in
our individual corners of pain to grapple with memory
which sticks
to us like our very skins.

We have missed you in this strange place called
freedom to which
you personally delivered us We wish to dance

to your life
to say Thank You
for letting the hippos
and the crocodiles of the Zambezi know the touch of
the skin
of an MK cadre know our song and the smell of our fear

Our tears have dried into silver stripes into lines of
seasons
which point to our past which in turn must point to the
future

Uncle Mark in bidding us farewell said we must
remember where we have come from

Tata you tricked us that morning lying on that bed a
Mona Lisa smile lingering around your gentle face
as if still about to
caress our eager hungry souls only to find things had
changed It was not to be like
the other morning when we all rushed to your bedside
which turned out to be the rendezvous with
the last smile from Comrade Chris Hani. That morning
we were greeted by your easy smile which carried our
relief that we could still hold your warm guiding hand

As I've said Tata
this place called freedom is strange a
strangeness made stranger by your absence
when through decades of desert times
our eyes were glued
to your head in the air your erect back marching
leading us through thunderstorms kneading us into a
dough.
We will never know why
your eye never touched the cake.

You taught us to be upright to work hard,
to be proud in humility you told us
we had to look good
not to take nonsense from anyone even when some of
us meandered through years of statelessness
as if we had no country, You led the way as we
wandered, waded and swam over mountains, mud and
across rivers to reach tonight to listen
to the echo from Mulungushi and Morogoro, Dakawa,
Iringa, Uganda, Angola,
How can I ever mention them all
'Koba njani sesihleli no Tambo'
Little did we know
that tonight you would look at us from across
in the land of our ancestors

Tata tonight I wish I were a poet
I would summon a giant river of words to match the
monument you are. Here I stand
I tremble at the feet of my wish to find
the words to resurrect your gentle eloquence through
your eye through your voice

so many times we need it here to tell the world where
we have come from Uncle Mark said we must never
forget that
so we always know where we are going

Tata, I wish I could be a painter
I would pluck all
the colour from everywhere I would scoop up gallons
nay barrels of seawater
suck colours from the trees and flowers
I'd even reach out for the blue of the sky
so I could fill up dams with different colours to paint a
mural across the land so the women of this nation can
ululate their salute to your distinct voice which
rose to be counted and heard as the debates
rolled and raged through the forties Let the women be
mobilised and organised!
Let equal membership be theirs as much as humanity
is theirs!
the ANC Women's League was born!

I would carefully select colours fitting in texture and
brilliance to paint symphonies of music whose notes
would leap swing and sway with
the volume tempo and rhythm suited to our celebration
of the hope you hammered out of years of people's
struggle for liberation.

From Angola you reminded the woman's place is in
the struggle as indeed
the lives of many heroines had told us
from Maxeke to Ngoyi and countless others whose
brave and determined deeds
remain an articulate statement

The rolling drums of memories summoned by your
presence here tonight will bolster
our longing and resolve THANK YOU
for bringing us here
to this place called freedom THANK YOU
for your presence here tonight.

This tribute to Oliver Tambo was commissioned by the
ANC Women's League. It was written and presented
on 31 October 1998.

This poem was first published in *Oliver Tambo
Remembered*, edited by Z. Pallo Jordan (Pan Macmillan,
2007)

The Durban Strikes of 1973



By Thembile Ndabeni

January of this year marked the 40th anniversary of the 1973 strikes by the workers in Durban. These actions preceded the famous 1976 Soweto and connected student uprisings. Maybe it is safe to say they laid a basis for the latter.

It is worth noting that these courageous actions of workers took place in the context of intensified repression, the denial of even the most elementary trade union rights and the embedded relationship between the private sector, the apartheid regime

and the Bantustan administration under Buthelezi. The strikes were like a fire that starts with one match and spreads uncontrollably.

The strike was started in one factory, the Coronation Brick and Tile factory, by about 2000 workers. Then workers from various sectors around Durban went on strike as well demanding higher wages and better working conditions. This is why the action is referred to as 1973 Durban strikes.

The strikes were significant because:

- they gave a great impetus to future

actions by the working class in our country;

- they signalled a revival of the struggle for national liberation;
- they demonstrated that militants of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) were still involved in mobilising and organising workers; and
- they helped to inspire the youth of 1976.

The shocking media coverage of the strikes demonstrated the reactionary anti-working class attitudes and prejudices of the bourgeois owned and controlled mass media.

But it is painful to note that whilst we celebrate and mark other notable actions these strikes are ignored. Why do we not even hear or know whether those heroes are still alive? For those who are alive, how disappointing it must be to be forgotten. What do the families of those workers think and feel about this aberration in our memories?

One thing we must know or remember is that history is not made by individuals but by a collective. Even if an individual shines and gets the lime light, that is done only in the context of the collective. Can a starring role in a movie exist without space, time and other people? The working class of today must not fail in their duties because of other commitments, especially selfish ones. Of course they cannot ignore issues affecting them on a daily basis but they should honour the 1973 Durban strikes heroes. We must remember that their contribution made an enormous difference to where we are today, in relation to democracy and workers' rights in particular. Remembering and honouring them also means celebrating their victory which shaped the workers' struggle and the struggle in general. They made the apartheid regime, Bantustan administration and the bourgeoisie eat humble pie! They proved that *unity is strength, eendrag maak mag, umanyano ngamandla!*

Therefore there is no way that they can be forgotten, otherwise history will not forgive us but instead forget us! ■

The Editor welcomes unsolicited submissions to the Readers' Forum and encourages those who would like to discuss or debate contentious issues to use this space. Please keep word count to no more than 800 words and note that some pieces might be edited for length. Send your contribution to: editor@thethinker.co.za.

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