Joe Gaobakwe Matthews

Matthews[1], who has the gift of total recall, provides a detailed account of his developing political consciousness in the 1940s at St Peter's School, where he was influenced by people such as Oliver Tambo, his activities in the Youth League during the 1940s, ANC activity at Fort Hare University, the activities of people such as Robert Sobukwe, A.P. Mda and others, the 1949 Programme of Action, the 1950 May Day Strike, the Defiance Campaign, the Congress of the People, the Treason Trial, his work with Chief Luthuli, the formation of the PAC, the turn to armed struggle and reasons for the ANC's subsequent relationship with the Soviet Union, the 1962 Lobatse Conference, his journey with Mandela through Africa in the early 1960s, the attempt to get the support for the armed struggle from the World Council of Churches, the drive to get military training bases, the alliance with ZAPU and the background to the Wankie Campaign, and the Morogoro Conference.

My name is Joe Gaobakwe Matthews. I was born in Durban on the 17th June 1929. My father's name was Zachariah Keodirelang Matthews and my mother was Freda Deborah Bokwe, the daughter of the Reverend John Knox Bokwe. My father's first job, after he graduated from Fort Hare, was at Adams College, near Durban, and my mother went to work nearby at Inanda Seminary for girls. So they were fairly close to each other before they got married in 1928. I spent the first six years of my life at Adams. When my father was appointed a lecturer at Fort Hare he moved back to Alice in the Eastern Cape. Most people know me as being from Alice, a Xhosa-speaking area. My mother was Xhosa and, of course, isiXhosa is the language in which I am most comfortable.

I started school at Lovedale. It was called the Practising School, that is, the school at which trainee teachers from the Lovedale Training College did their practice teaching. I was at the Lovedale Practising School up to 1942 and did my Standard 6 there. Living in Alice also meant that I got to know many generations of Fort Hare and Lovedale students. That's how I met O. R. Tambo[2], whose reputation had preceded him at Fort Hare. In 1936, two African students at St

[1] Edited by Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane from the interview conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu and Bernard Magubane, 18 July 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

[2] Oliver Reginald Tambo was born on 27th October 1917 in Mbizana. He was educated at the Ludeke Methodist School in the Mbizana district, Holy Cross Mission and St Peters College. At the University College of Fort Hare he obtained his Bachelor of Science Degree in 1941. He was among the founding members of the ANC Youth League in 1944 and became its first National Secretary. He was elected President of the Transvaal ANCYL in 1948 and national vice-president in 1949. In 1946 Tambo was elected onto the Transvaal Executive of the ANC. After the Defiance Campaign, ANC Secretary-General Walter Sisulu was banned and Tambo replaced him as Secretary-General. Oliver Tambo was among the Treason Trialists, and in 1958, left the post of Secretary-General to become the Deputy President of the ANC. The following year, 1959, he, like many of his colleagues, was served with a five-year banning order. After the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, Tambo was designated by the ANC to travel abroad to set up the ANC's international mission and mobilise international opinion in opposition to the apartheid system. Working in conjunction with Dr Yusuf Dadoo he was instrumental in the establishment of the South African United Front. Tambo was able to establish ANC missions in Egypt, Ghana, Morocco and London. In 1965 Tanzania and Zambia gave the ANC camp facilities to house trained Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) combatants.

Peter's Secondary School in Johannesburg obtained their Junior Certificates in the first class division. Now at the time that was unheard of. The same students went on to pass their matric with distinction in 1938. That was Tambo and Joe Mokoena. Tambo arrived at Fort Hare in 1939. He and Mokoena registered to do a BSc degree, majoring in Physics and Mathematics. That, too, was something new for people to go for those subjects. Tambo was a very staunch Anglican and when my family attended Sunday church services, he would always be there.

When I think of it, very few people knew O. R. as well as I did. After Fort Hare, we both landed at St Peter's in 1943. He was my teacher for the five years I was at St Peter's. Whenever he fell ill – sometimes he became seriously ill from asthma – I would be the one to bring him his medicines. We had a very good relationship. And that is when the African National Congress[1] Youth League was formed in 1944[2]. A number of teachers at St Peter's were involved, like Victor Sefora, who was most enthusiastic about the Youth League.

Regarding the formation of the Youth League, all the historians say that the Youth League and the Women's League[3] were decided upon at the 1943 ANC annual conference in Bloemfontein. People think every conference of the ANC was held in Bloemfontein. That's wrong. The 1943 conference was in Kimberley. That important conference adopted a new ANC constitution, the Xuma Constitution[4], to replace the constitution adopted in 1919. The same conference passed a resolution to establish a Youth League and a Women's League. People often get confused because the Women's League had been in existence before. What the 1943 resolution implied

1 The ANC was formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress (it changed its name to the ANC in 1923) with the aim of replacing tribal opposition to white rule with a united African force. At first its membership was narrow – its leaders drawn from among traditional chiefs and wealthy Africans – its aims were limited and its activities were law-abiding.

2 Young African nationalists such as Anton Lembede, Nelson Mandela, Peter Mda, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo formed the Youth League in 1944. They rejected what they called “foreign” leadership and ideologies, and were opposed to cooperation with both whites and Indians, particularly communists, believing that cooperation inevitably resulted in Africans being dominated by those groups. They insisted that in building “a powerful national liberation movement”, the creed should be one of pure African nationalism. The Youth League felt that for too long the ANC had been a mere talking shop for intellectuals, passing resolutions and making token protests to the government. It devised a Programme of Action, of strikes and civil disobedience, and when the Afrikaner Nationalists came to power in 1948, and began forthwith to implement their policy of apartheid, the League planned a national stoppage of work for 1950.

3 The ANC, when it was formed in 1912, did not accept women as members. There was no broad women's organisation during the first decades of the ANC's existence. In 1931 the Bantu Women's League (BWL) was recognised as the women's branch of the ANC. Its first president was Charlotte Maxeke. The BWL was mostly involved in passive resistance and concentrated on the fight against passes for black women. In 1943 women were formally admitted as ANC members. The ANCWL was formed in 1948.

4 The Xuma Constitution was adopted by the 1943 ANC conference. This provided for individual membership based on payment of a membership fee. It also clearly defined the structure of the organisation, consisting of the National Executive, elected at national conferences, to which delegates came from branches established throughout the country; the Provincial Executive, elected at an annual conference to which delegates were drawn from branches within the provinces; and at the local level an executive elected by a conference of the branch, which became the machine for the recruitment of members.

was that, because the Women's League had sort of gone down and disappeared for some time, it was being re-launched.

I think it's also important to correct the impression you will find in the literature that I became politically conscious at St Peter's, influenced by O. R. Tambo and others. I was raised in a household full of politics, day and night. The Reverend [James] Calata, Dr Bokwe, Tshekedi Khama, Dr Molema and others were in and out of our house. So politics was there all the time when I was still a youngster. It was the home atmosphere, the literature, the newspapers, everything in the house and then also the Second World War. The stimulating atmosphere of the World War era has not been sufficiently highlighted. Why was the generation of the 1940s different? Why did they become radical? The struggle during the war and the anti-colonial struggle in India led by Mahatma Gandhi were stimulating to everyone, youngsters and old people alike.

In the 1940s young people were unusually involved in politics. When I think of St Peter's, for example, we had a Youth League branch and interesting chaps there. I think the cleverest was a fella from Pretoria, Kgorosi Sesoko. He was a little older than we were and widely read. He read books on philosophy, Marxist books and so on, and if he got a book he would say: "Hey, you must read this." Kgorosi Sesoko was a great stimulus. Duma Nokwe was another voracious reader. Many years later we laughed at ourselves because at school we were reading books we couldn't possibly have understood at that time. Duma Nokwe used to pretend to be ill so that he could stay in bed, reading. One day I found him reading *Problems of Leninism* by Stalin. So, years later I said to him: "But Duma, that book, you couldn't have understood it. You were in Form II man!" You know, it was a period of reading and arguing. We used to argue with one British teacher called Mitchell, who was our Geography master and was a great supporter of the British Empire. And the school, of course, was a very free school, very liberal. The Fathers of the Community of the Resurrection, who ran the school, had an enormous library and some students were allowed to use that library, which was different from the school library.

[1] Reverend Calata, a leading figure of the ANC since the 1930s, was secretary-general of the All Africa Convention in the 1930s. In the 1930s and early 1940s Calata, president of the Cape ANC since 1930, served a term as secretary-general of the ANC. Calata was also among the 156 leaders charged with treason in 1956.

[2] Born at South Evaton, just outside Johannesburg, on May 13, 1927, Duma Nokwe was educated at St Peter's school and Fort Hare University. After graduating with a B.Sc. degree and a diploma in education, he took up a teaching post at Krugersdorp High School. Active in the ANC Youth League from his university days (he was its secretary from 1953 to 1958), Nokwe went as a member of the South African delegation to the 1953 World Youth Festival in Bucharest, and afterwards toured the Soviet Union, China and Britain. Nokwe subsequently studied law, but was effectively prevented from practising his profession by the Native Affairs Department. He was arrested in December 1956 in the notorious Treason Trial. He was elected secretary-general of the ANC at its 46th annual conference in Durban in 1958. Jailed for five months during the 1960 State of Emergency, he was no sooner released than he was busy at the task of reorganisation, and was one of the leaders of the multi-party committee that laid the foundations for the All-In African conference at Maritzburg in 1961. Facing a long period of imprisonment under the Unlawful Organisations Act for promoting the aims of the banned ANC, Nokwe was ordered by the underground leadership to leave the country and crossed into Bechuanaland in January 1963, together with Moses Kotane.

We really were great students of politics and voracious readers. Then, of course, we had O. R., who would bring to the school [Anton] Lembede[1] and A.P. Mda[2] and others. I remember the very first meeting we had with Lembede. He started his speech with the sentence: "As Karl Marx said, a pair of boots is better than all the plays of Shakespeare." That created a great uproar. Mr Mitchell was shouting: "That's not true."

You had a lot of politics. You had the fascists, the Ossewabrandwag[3] and all the grey shirts. The fascist fellows used to knock us about if we met them in the streets, on the pavement. You had to run away. So there was a lot of turmoil. The miners' strike in 1946[4] shook Johannesburg, as did

[1] Lembede was elected the first President of the ANC Youth League at its inaugural conference in 1944. Recognised as an outstanding intellectual, who lived his life ahead of his time, his reputation as a political philosopher and hero was built to an even more exalted level by radical African Nationalists following his early death in 1947. Young as he was, he made an indelible mark on the thinking and activities of the Congress itself. Lembede was born on a farm at Eston in Natal on March 21st, 1914. He studied at Adams College where he trained as a teacher from 1933-1935. In 1943, he abandoned teaching and moved to Johannesburg to serve legal articles under Dr Seme. Lembede was initiated into the ANC by Jordan Ngubane and A.P. Mda in 1943. Together with other intellectuals, the three worked to form the ANC Youth League in 1944. In April 1944, he was elected Provincial Assistant Secretary for the Transvaal ANC, and in December 1946 he was elected to the National Executive Committee and became a member of the National Working Committee under A.B. Xuma's leadership. (Refer to the ANC website – www.anc.org.za.)

[2] Ashby Solomzi Peter Mda was born on 6 April 1916, in the Herschel district on the border with Lesotho. After he qualified as a teacher, Mda struggled to secure a teaching job in the Eastern Cape until he settled for menial work as a gardener and kitchen boy in a white household in East London. In 1937, he set off to the Witwatersrand, where he continued to work as a gardener and kitchen boy and then at a steel foundry until he found a teaching job. Mda's political career began when he attended the All-African Convention in Bloemfontein in mid-1936. When AAC support dwindled towards the end of the latter part of the 1930s, Mda began to advocate African Nationalism. Mda threw his support behind the newly appointed President of the ANC Dr Xuma. However, he had misgivings towards the Communist Party. He believed the party's intention was to infiltrate and take control of the ANC. He played a significant role in the formation of the ANC Youth League. When Anton Lembede arrived in Johannesburg to serve articles at Seme's law firm, Mda struck a political and intellectual partnership with him. Following Lembede's sudden death on 29 July 1947, Mda was named acting president of the Youth League until he was formally elected as president in 1948.

[3] The Ossewabrandwag ("Oxwagon Sentinel" – OB) was a nationalist Afrikaner organisation in South Africa, founded in Bloemfontein on February 4, 1939. It opposed South Africa's entry into World War II on the British side, and created a paramilitary group called Stormjaers (or storm troopers), modelled on the Nazi SA, which carried out sabotage against Jan Smuts' government. Many members of the OB were incarcerated during WWII. John Vorster, who would become Prime Minister of South Africa after the death of Hendrik Verwoerd, was detained at Koffiefontein for the duration of the war. After the war the Ossewabrandwag went underground, but many of its members rose in the ranks of the apartheid government.

[4] In May 1946, a conference, attended by 1 100 delegates representing the majority of the 300 000 miners, put forward a demand for a minimum wage of ten shillings a day and the repeal of mine regulations banning meetings in the mine compounds. They decided that if the demands were not met they would strike on August 12. The mine magnates did not even reply to the workers' letter setting out these demands. On August 12, over 100 000 miners went on strike, and ten mines were shut down completely and 11 others seriously affected. They were joined by workers from other industries. Prime Minister Smuts ordered the army out and in the days that followed, the workers were bludgeoned back into the mine shafts after they were out on strike for about a week. Hundreds of miners were killed. J.B. Marks and other leaders of the strike were arrested and charged with sedition.

the 1947 occupation of City Council land by Sofasonke Mpanza[1], with literally thousands of people building shacks and building shantytowns overnight. Moroka Township and all those places emerged in a matter of weeks. The atmosphere in Johannesburg was very exciting and it affected everybody, young and old.

We were deeply involved in all those activities. The Communist Party[2] was busy. They had bookshops all over. There was competition between the ANC Youth League and the Young Communist League. I was, of course, in the Youth League and we were hot nationalists. Duma, Kgorosi and Richard Kekana were the Young Communist League people. We attacked them and accused them of being influenced by whites. They were not in the ANC Youth League at the time but had their own separate organisation. And sometimes they used to cheat us. They were very clever.

We once went to a meeting at Odeon Cinema in Sophiatown, which was going to be addressed by Father Huddleston[3]. When we arrived there, there was nobody. It was funny. Khwembu, who was a boxer, lived opposite the cinema, where he worked part time. He was regarded as one of the big shots in Sophiatown. These were the half gangsters who were dominating the place. He shouted at us: "What are you looking for?" We said: "We are looking for a meeting." He said: "The venue for the meeting has been changed. There were chaps here distributing leaflets. The meeting is now up there in the Square." So we asked ourselves: "What is this?" What had happened was that the Young Communist League chaps had come before us and told the people: "The meeting place has been changed." The people had been diverted to a meeting which was now being addressed by Young Communist League fellows.

It's very important to capture this excitement in the country because, as I say, very often people want to know: "But what happened in the 1940s which stimulated our politics so that we never

1 Sofasonke Mpanza was founder and leader from the mid-1940s of the Sofasonke Party of Orlando Township, Johannesburg, and a crusader for better housing for Johannesburg's Africans. In 1944 he led thousands of Africans, overflowing from the slums of Orlando, to set up a huge shantytown on the veld, with Mpanza as their unofficial "mayor." It was at this time that his nickname, "*Sofasonke*" ("we shall all die") was acquired. By dramatising the plight of the city's homeless workers, the shantytown movement created pressures leading to the construction of modern Soweto.

2 The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was formed in 1921. It was banned in 1950 after the passage of the Suppression of Communism Act.

3 Born on June 15, 1913, Father Trevor Huddleston was educated at Oxford University and became a monk in 1939. Two years later, he was posted to South Africa, where Afrikaner nationalism was on the rise, to work in the black slums near Johannesburg. During his years, beginning in 1943, as the priest in charge of the Anglican mission at Sophiatown, an African slum in Johannesburg, he contended that segregation was immoral. From the beginning he fought to alleviate poverty and rallied against laws that made blacks non-citizens in their own land. He fumed as bulldozers sent by the authorities destroyed the pitiful homes of his parishioners – and burned ever after with a desire to end such cruelty. Huddleston's support for the black cause made him a lifelong friend of ANC leaders like Mandela and Oliver Tambo. In 1956, he was recalled by his superiors, who feared that he might be expelled by the South African government.

stopped until freedom was achieved?" You can look at any aspect of life; you will find that there was a radicalisation of society which occurred during and immediately after the World War. We never really looked back from that time. Whereas, if you look at our history from 1912, there are periods of real downturn during which people even thought the ANC had disappeared. Seme[1] wrote his famous article that was published in *Umthetheli wa Bantu* in 1932, titled "Is the ANC dead?" in which he answered himself: "No, it's not dead." Of course, he was the president general of the ANC. But the ANC was really at rock bottom then and was considered by many as being a moribund organisation which had achieved nothing since 1912. And then came 1935, when there was a revival because of the Hertzog Bills[2], which necessitated the formation of the All-Africa Convention[3] that aroused people again. But nothing beats what happened during the war for radicalisation. So I think those who are looking at things from the perspective of the ANC need to look at that phenomenon. Why it happened, and why it produced the people who were going to lead the movement right up to liberation.

At St Peter's, I became the chairman of our branch of the Youth League and the secretary was a chap called Michael Tsoke, who later became Mayor of Ga-Rankuwa. Henry Gordon

1 Pixley Kalsaka Seme, the first Treasurer-General of the ANC, was born on 1 October 1881 in Natal. He obtained his primary education at the local mission school where the American Congregationalist missionary, Reverend S.C. Pixley, took an interest in him and arranged for him to go the Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts in the USA. He then attended Columbia University in New York and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in April 1906. He then went to Jesus College, Oxford, in England, where he read law in September 1906. After he returned to South Africa in 1910, Seme set up private practice in Johannesburg. On 8 January 1912, Seme, Mangena and two other foreign-educated lawyers, Richard Msimang and George Montsioa, called for a convention of Africans to form the SANNC in Bloemfontein. One hundred delegates attended its inaugural meeting, where Seme was the keynote speaker. With financial assistance from the Queen regent of Swaziland, Seme launched the SANNC newspapers, *Abantu Batho*, which was to be published for the next 20 years. Seme was elected President-General of the ANC at the 1930 annual congress, a position he held until 1937.

2 The Hertzog Bills were introduced in 1935 by General Hertzog's government. Perhaps the most important was one designed to eliminate the Cape African franchise. The Representation of Natives' Bill was designed to remove African voters in the Cape from the common rolls on which they had been registered since 1854. Voting on a communal roll, they would elect three whites to the assembly, then consisting of 150 members elected by whites and a sprinkling of Coloureds; and two whites to the provincial council. Chiefs, local councils, urban advisory boards and election committees in all provinces were to elect four whites to the senate by a system of block voting. The act also created a Native Representative Council of six white officials, and four nominated and twelve elected Africans. This was to be a purely advisory body, concerned only with matters affecting Africans. The second bill was the Native Trust and Land Bill, which, while increasing the area of land which Africans could occupy, extended the provision of the Native Land Act of 1913 which prohibited Africans from buying land outside the scheduled areas except with official consent. The ANC and other political organisations responded by holding an All-Africa Convention.

3 The All-Africa Convention (AAC) was established after the introduction of the Hertzog Bills. The ANC President-General Pixley ka Seme and Professor Jabavu took the initiative in calling a convention to meet the challenge. This would be the first convention to represent the vast masses. The mammoth convention, said to be the greatest ever held, met at Bloemfontein on 15 December 1935. The 400 delegates represented all the political groupings: left, right and centre; trade unions, farmers, shopkeepers, teachers, churchmen, and a score of local communities. Its mission was to oppose the Hertzog Bill and ask for a round-table conference. The only effective decisions taken were to make the All-African Convention a permanent body and to send another deputation to the prime minister.

Makgothi was on our committee. When we joined in 1944, I was fifteen years old and in Junior Certificate. So when chaps think that the first time we got young people in politics was in 1976, it is all wrong. South African blacks produced very sophisticated young chaps at an early age because of oppression, because of the pass laws, because of many other things. Young people in South Africa, especially in the townships, have always been wide-awake. A chap knew what to say if the police came and asked questions. He'd never give an answer which helped the authorities but would say something like: "No, there's nobody in the house." We've always had that in South Africa; it's really the result of oppression. So the 1976 thing was not really a new phenomenon in South Africa. Young people had been involved for a long time. At schools, at colleges, everywhere you found that young people were very politically conscious and active. It's not a new thing at all.

After I passed Matric in 1947, I went to Fort Hare in 1948. The new thing that happened in 1948 was that the Youth League, which had been a Transvaal provincial affair, expanded to all the provinces. A. P. Mda spread the Youth League beyond the confines of the Transvaal, to the Cape, Natal, and the Orange Free State. Before 1948 the Youth League was a Transvaal phenomenon. In fact, it's inaccurate to say that Lembede was leading the Youth League nationwide. He was provincial leader of the Youth League because in the other provinces we didn't have Youth League branches. A. P. Mda was the first national president of the Youth League, not Lembede, because the 1948 conference in Bloemfontein was the first national conference of the Youth League and it elected Mda as national president and Mandela as secretary. So that's really when we became a national organisation. In 1948 when the Youth League was started at Fort Hare, under the leadership of Godfrey Pitje, people were brought in who had not been ANC before. People like Robert Sobukwe[1] and Dennis Siwisa were staunch Unity Movement[2] chaps. They came from Healdtown as Unity Movement supporters of I. B.

[1] Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe was born in Graaff-Reinet in the Cape Province in 1924. Sobukwe won a scholarship to the Methodist boarding school at Healdtown in the Eastern Cape. Following the completion of his schooling he enrolled at Fort Hare University, where he joined the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) in 1948. In 1949 Sobukwe was elected as president of the Fort Hare Students' Representative Council. In 1954 he was appointed as a lecturer in African Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. During his time in Johannesburg he edited *The Africanist*, and soon began to criticise the ANC. At the inaugural conference of the PAC he was unanimously elected president. On 21 March 1960, at the launch of the PAC anti-pass campaign, he gave himself up for arrest at the Orlando police station. He was given a surprisingly harsh sentence of 3 years' imprisonment, at the end of which Parliament enacted a General Law Amendment Act, the so-called "Sobukwe clause", which empowered t h e Minister of Justice to prolong the detention of any political prisoner indefinitely. He was moved to Robben Island, where he remained for six additional years. On his release in 1969 Sobukwe was allowed to join his family in Kimberley while remaining under twelve-hour house arrest.

[2] The Non-European Unity Movement was formed in late 1943 as a united front of "non-white" organisations, and opposed collaboration with the government on the basis of a Ten Point Programme. The programme linked the land question to all other socio-economic and political problems. Set up as a federal body, NEUM's main affiliates were the Anti-CAD, almost entirely Coloured and based mainly in the Western Cape, and the All-African Convention (AAC), almost wholly black and drawing its support largely from the Eastern Cape. In addition, the Anti-Segregation Council (ASC), a militant breakaway faction of the Natal Indian Congress, affiliated to NEUM in 1948. The Anti-CAD had been formed in Cape Town in February 1943, a mere 10 months before NEUM, to mobilise opposition to the Smuts government's announcement the month before of its intention to set up a Coloured Affairs Department as well as a consultative body of Coloured leaders, the Coloured Advisory Council. The Anti-CAD campaign gathered rapid support in ensuing months and rejected the initiative as a segregatory measure designed to isolate the Coloured people and strip them of their remaining rights. By 1943 the All-African Convention consisted predominantly of the radical remnant of this former umbrella body, formed in December 1935 to co-ordinate black opposition to the Hertzog bills. Under the leadership of I.B. Tabata, Jane Gool and Eastern Cape teachers such as Wycliffe Tsotsi, Nathaniel Honono and Leo Sihlali, the radicals drew most of their support from the Cape African Teachers' Association and had some influence in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Tabata and Gool, who lived in Cape Town, were also active in the Anti-CAD and formed a crucial link between the two organisations.

Tabata, whereas we were coming in from Johannesburg as staunch ANC nationalists. Healdtown, a Methodist institution, where Mandela also went, is about 6.5 miles from Fort Hare; whereas Lovedale is a Presbyterian College. So we had to win over the Unity Movement chaps and they came in. Tabata came to Fort Hare to try and dissuade them from joining the Youth League. That's how Sobukwe joined in 1948. Fort Hare, of course, became a big centre of political activity, not for the first time.

We had a very big strike in 1941 at Fort Hare. This strike came about as a result of the boarding master, a chap called Lund, kicking one of the women members of staff working in the kitchen: and students protested. That's how the strike started. The leader of the strike was O. R., supported by, among others, a Communist Party chap called Cassiem Amra, who later became prominent in the Natal Indian Congress[1]; Kobus, who later became secretary-general of the All-Africa Convention; and Ntsu Mokhehle who, of course, later became a leader of the Basutoland Congress Party. In 1942, there was another strike, also led by Tambo. But this one had a strange twist to it. The warden of Beda, which was the Anglican hostel, insisted that all students must attend services on Sunday. He made it compulsory and Tambo led a strike against that, though he himself always went to church on Sunday. He said in principle he could not support the idea of compelling people to go to church. As a result of that strike he lost the opportunity to get his University Education Diploma. He just had the BSc degree and this eventually led him to leave teaching to become a lawyer, because without that UED his salary was very low. After five years teaching at St Peter's he decided: "No, I'm going to try something else." If he had had the UED, I doubt if he would have left teaching to go into law. Because of that 1942 strike, he was suspended and never wrote the UED exams.

[1] The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) was founded in 1894 with Mohandas Gandhi as Secretary. The organisation was formed to forge unity in response to anti-Indian legislation. The South African Indian Congress (SAIC) was a national body for radical Indians that grew out of the NIC. The SAIC was formed in 1924 – in view of the upsurge of anti-Asiatic agitation in the European community and moves to enact legislation to segregate the Indians – to look after the interests of the Indian community. Under conservative leadership for many years, the SAIC depended on petitions and deputations to the authorities and appeals for help to the Government of India (then under British control). The NIC, under the leadership of Dr Monty Naicker, became a key part of the Congress Alliance through the national body, the South African Indian Congress, during the 1950s. The NIC became dormant during the mid-1960s as state repression intensified, its leadership was banned and some members went into exile. Yet unlike the other political organisations in the Congress Alliance, the Indian Congress itself was not banned. The Transvaal Indian Congress, a body similar to the NIC, was established in the Transvaal in 1927.

One of Mda's demands, as he went around spreading the Youth League, was that the ANC must adopt a Programme of Action[1]. Before that the ANC had elaborated its official programme, "Africans' Claims".[2] But Mda said what was needed was a Programme of Action and not just policy statements of how liberation was going to be achieved. Therefore, the annual conference of the ANC in 1948 was faced with this demand by the Youth League for a Programme of Action. The conference took a decision to defer the issue in order to give provinces an opportunity to draft programmes of action, which would then be considered at the 1949 conference. There's a lot of historical confusion caused by the fact that there were many programmes of action and people don't realise that there were four drafts from each province and the Youth League also had a draft and then the final one. The 1949 conference appointed a committee, under my father, to bring these programmes together and to produce one programme of action, which became the well-known Programme of Action. I need to clear another controversy surrounding the Programme of Action. There was an attempt by the PAC to say that the Programme of Action was drafted by Sobukwe. It didn't quite happen like that. There were a lot of hands involved. The main message of that Programme was mass action, civil disobedience and strikes as methods that could be used in the struggle for liberation.

I must make a point so that you don't get surprised later on. Sometimes people get surprised and ask: "How can a person remember so much?" It has been recorded, even at the United Nations, that I have total recall; my father had the same gift. In fact, people like Walter Sisulu[3] and others

[1] The 1949 Programme of Action, adopted by the ANC at a national conference, paved the way for an era of organised mass militant action. The programme was both a declaration of principles and a formulation of the methods that should be adopted to achieve them. It broke new ground on both subjects and affirmed that the ANC's fundamental objective was "to achieve national freedom from white domination, and the attainment of political independence". This implied "the rejection of the concept of segregation, apartheid, trusteeship or white leadership which are all in one way or another motivated by the idea of white domination". The Programme urged the adoption of more aggressive tactics such as boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience and non-cooperation and was widely hailed as a triumph of the ANC Youth League's militancy. The ANCYL had been campaigning against established methods of protest as outdated and inadequate to meet the challenge presented by the ruthlessness of the National Party government.

[2] In December 1942, the ANC conference requested its President, Dr. A.B. Xuma, to appoint a committee to study the Atlantic Charter and draft a bill of rights to be presented to the peace conference at the end of the Second World War. Accordingly, an Atlantic Charter Committee met on December 13 and 14, 1943, in Bloemfontein. Professor Z.K. Matthews was elected Chairman. The report of this Committee – "Africans' Claims in South Africa" – was unanimously adopted by the ANC annual conference on 16 December 1943. This statement of the aspirations of the African people was one of the most important documents of the ANC.

[3] Born on May 18 1912, Sisulu and his elder sister Rosabella were brought up in Engcobo, Transkei, by his mother, his uncle Dyantyi Hlakula and his grandparents. At the age of 14 Sisulu left mission school to work. Sisulu joined the ANC in 1940, the same year that A.B. Xuma, also from Engcobo, assumed the position of President-General of the ANC. In 1944 Sisulu, together with O.R. Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Anton Lembede, etc., founded the ANC Youth League and became its first national secretary. In 1943 he attended conferences of the Federation of Democratic Youth in Romania and the International Union of Students in Poland. He also travelled to the USSR, China and the UK. In 1949 he became ANCYL secretary and in the same year was elected the first full-time Secretary-General of the ANC. Sisulu was one of the accused in the Treason Trial. In 1960, during the State of Emergency, he was detained without trial. The next year he faced prosecution twice. Sisulu was arrested six times in 1962 and placed under 13-hour house arrest on October 26 and under 24-hour house arrest on April 3, 1963. Pending an appeal against a six-year sentence, Sisulu forfeited bail of R6 000 on April 19 1963, and went underground. The next time the nation heard from Sisulu was when he spoke on Radio Freedom on June 26, 1963 assuring the people that Umkhonto we Sizwe had decided to fight on an "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" basis. On 11 July 1963, Walter Sisulu was arrested and detained under the 90-day law. He was jailed for life along with the other Rivonia trialists in 1963.

who know – because during the Treason Trial[1] this came up a lot as to what took place in the past – would often say: "No, get that young Matthews, he will remember what happened." So, I'm fortunate in having that gift of being able to recall things, you know, and people and dates and events and so on. It's something that has helped many times in the movement when people wondered about something. I was able to provide what actually took place and where a thing could be found, for example where a document could be found. You know in African society there were people like that, who remembered things. I have that gift of total recall.

One of the proposals in the Programme of Action was that there should be a national strike. We decided on a strike on the 1st of May 1950, but the strike was to be confined to the Transvaal to coincide with the Defence of Free Speech Convention in protest against the banning imposed on various Communist Party leaders, including [Dr Yusuf] Dadoo and J.B. Marks. It was a very successful strike, although marred in the evening by the shooting of eighteen demonstrators.

1 In 1956, 156 leaders of the ANC, the SAIC, the Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Congress (the Congress Alliance) were arrested in a country-wide police swoop. The leaders were brought to trial in Pretoria, charged with treason, in a trial that ended in their acquittal in 1961. Most of the accused had attended the Congress of the People. The focus of the evidence was the policy of the ANC between 1955 and 1956 with the Freedom Charter as the key document. After long months of preparatory examination, the charges against 61, among them Luthuli and Tambo, were dropped. By April 1959, only thirty remained on trial, the indictment against the others having been quashed. One hundred and fifty witnesses had been examined, as well as nearly 10 000 documents, before the State concluded its case. The trial had lasted four-and-a-half years. Then, in March 1961, before the defence could conclude its argument, the three judges interrupted to announce a unanimous verdict: Not guilty.

2 Dr Yusuf Dadoo was born on September 5, 1909, in Krugersdorp, to the family of a prosperous Indian trader. In 1929, at the age of 19, he joined the London branch of the Indian National Congress and was arrested in a demonstration for Indian freedom. He came under the influence of Pandit Nehru and of Marxists who advocated a "united front" against fascism. All the time, he kept close contact with South Africa, trying to encourage resistance against the racist onslaughts. Returning to South Africa in 1936, he rallied the Indian people against the compromising leadership of the Transvaal Indian Congress for militant resistance against anti-Indian measures and for a united front with the African majority against racist oppression. He organised the Non-European United Front in the Transvaal and became its Secretary-General. And in 1939 he joined the Communist Party of South Africa.

3 John B. Marks was born on March 21, 1903, in Ventersdorp in the Western Transvaal. After listening to S. P. Bunting addressing a meeting of workers at the mine where he was employed, J.B. Marks joined the Communist Party in 1928. He was elected to the Central Committee of the Party in 1932. Marks was a leading figure in the formation of the African Mine Workers' Union, which he served as president. In August 1946 under his inspiring leadership, the miners came out in a historic strike. He rose to become Transvaal President of the ANC in 1950 and later its Treasurer-General. J. B. Marks was subjected to numerous and repeated bans and restrictions on his activities and movements. He continued with underground activity, both in the ANC and in the SACP of which he was elected Chairman at its fifth illegal conference in 1962. He was then instructed by the National Executive Committee of the ANC to join the headquarters of the External Mission in Tanzania.

Immediately after the May Day strike,[1] the ANC called a national strike for the 26th of June 1950. Nationwide, the strike itself wasn't particularly successful. The *Rand Daily Mail*, which was the main morning paper, described it as a 95% flop in the Transvaal. But in the Eastern Cape province, especially in Port Elizabeth, it was a total 100% strike and brought the names of Dr Njongwe and others into national prominence. June 26th became an important date because of that strike. It was the first general strike in our history where people were taking up an essentially political issue, the Suppression of Communism Act.[2] Now people thought that Act was really aimed at the African liberation movement, and not at the Communist Party and, therefore, they decided to have a protest strike against that Act and other laws that were passed that year. The Group Areas Act[3] was a very important one. From that moment we felt that the movement was now becoming a mass movement where the leadership was appealing to the masses. Before that the ANC had been characterised by delegations, which were making demands to the authorities. But now you were getting a shift where the movement was addressing the masses and calling on the masses to act and that was felt by us to be the beginning of mass action.

Then, after the 1950 strikes, people started asking: "Where do we go from here?" Civil disobedience had been mentioned in the Programme of Action as one of the forms of action that we must embark upon. A wild fellow who was in the ANC at the time but later went to the PAC, called Gaur Radebe, would often say: "It's time we had action!" He had led the Alexandra boycott of the buses in 1945, which, by the way, were buses owned by an African, R.G. Baloyi. Transport was owned by Africans before the National Party came to power. We laughed when the radicals in Soweto and elsewhere said that Africans should buy PUTCO (Peoples Utility Transport Corporation). There was an uproar among the radicals, who found it anomalous that

1 The 1950 May Day strike was planned by an *ad hoc* group in the Transvaal, consisting of representatives of the South African Indian Congress, the Communist Party and a section of the ANC. This group called for a stoppage of work in the Johannesburg area on the 1st of May 1950, May Day. More than half the Johannesburg workforce stayed at home. But the day ended in tragedy: the police attacked gatherings, and, in the subsequent riots, fired on the crowds, killing eighteen Africans and injuring many more. This action led to rapprochement between the Youth League, the Indians, and the Communists, and the League decided to support the ANC, the Indian Congress, and the Communist Party in organising a demonstration of mourning and protest, to be held towards the end of June 1950.

2 The Act, passed in 1950, banned the Communist Party of South Africa and allowed for the banning of any other organisation deemed to further the aims of communism. The latter were deemed to encompass such an extremely wide range of activities that the state could attach the label of communism to just about any opposition. The Act also made provision for various restrictions on persons, gatherings or publications regarded as promoting communism or its aims. By the end of the 1950s, hundreds of ANC and other Congress Alliance members had been subjected to banning orders, restrictions, criminal charges and harassment.

3 The Group Areas Act made provision for the reversal of existing practices of racial integration. Residential segregation became mandatory and areas were demarcated for the different racial groups. This set the stage for the removal of people living in integrated areas or in areas designated for another racial group. The Act also restricted economic activity in racially designated areas for specific racial groups.

we should buy PUTCO and then be saddled with transport and find ourselves having to strike against our own bus companies. But Africans owned the buses before PUTCO. In Pretoria it was Mr Mothle; in Alexandra it was Baloyi; in Orlando it was Ngema; who also spread to Natal. But then the government of Dr Malan introduced the Native Services Levy Act[1] in 1947, which provided for subsidies for transport, and then the whites moved in and bought out the Africans.

The whole of 1951 was spent trying to work out a plan for civil disobedience. People didn't want to call it civil disobedience. They didn't want to call it *satyagraha*[2] either. So Sisulu said it must be called the Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws[3], so that it became our own product and was not linked with Mahatma Gandhi. With us, non-violence was not a philosophy or a creed. It was purely a tactic. A committee consisting of Walter Sisulu, Yusuf Cachalia, Dadoo and J. B. Marks drew up a plan for the Defiance Campaign. This committee, the Joint Planning Council, was a committee of the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress. Their plan was put forward at the 1951 conference of the ANC in Bloemfontein and revised by an ANC committee, headed by Z. K. The plan was presented to the 1952 annual conference by Mandela, dressed in his favourite brown double-breasted suit. You know, the two best-dressed chaps in the movement were Madiba and Cachalia on the Indian side. You would look at a suit that Madiba was wearing, and you would go all over and say: "I want a suit like that one." The tailors would tell you: "There's no such suit." He was really a great dresser!

The Defiance Campaign was going to start on the 6th of April 1952. The whites were going to celebrate the tercentenary of the arrival of Jan van Riebeck in South Africa and we were going to organise huge demonstrations and protests. On April 6, Madiba came with Dr Moroka[4] to

1 The Native Services Levy Act was passed in 1952. The Act laid down that urban employers of male Africans aged eighteen years and over should pay to the local authority a levy of 2s. 6d. a week for the provision and maintenance of water, sanitation, lighting, or road services outside an African township.

2 In July 1907, the small Indian community in the Transvaal launched a passive resistance campaign against the Asiatic Registration Act (the Black Act) designed to humiliate, harass and eventually expel them from the territory. Volunteers picketed registration offices and most of the Indians refused to take out permits under the Black Act. Mahatma Gandhi found that "passive resistance" was seen as a "weapon of the weak". He sought a term which could be understood by Indians and make it clear that the resistance was out of moral strength rather than any weakness. He invited suggestions and, in November 1907, invented the term "*satyagraha*" (firmness in truth).

3 The ANC took the decision at its annual conference in December 1950 to embark on a programme of civil disobedience as one of the steps in implementing its Programme of Action. It decided that there would be mass protests on April 6, 1952, followed by non-violent defiance of various apartheid laws. The actions were aimed at six unjust laws: the pass laws, cattle culling and the Bantu Authorities, Group Areas, Separate Representation of Voters and the Suppression of Communism Acts. The mode of protest adopted was to defy by contravening certain segregationist "petty apartheid" laws. Protestors would then be arrested and taken to jail. When the Defiance Campaign was launched in June 1952, Indian and Coloured people and a handful of whites joined the African participants. About 8 500 people were imprisoned during the campaign. In the aftermath of the campaign the membership of the ANC grew to 100 000. Government response was to ban virtually all leaders and organisers.

4 Dr J.S. Moroka was President-General of the ANC from 1949 to 1952.

Port Elizabeth, which was the main area, to preside over the protests. We had something like 40 000 people attending the demonstration. And we had a dinner that night. The dinner was a farewell to my father, who was leaving to take up a post of visiting professor at the Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University. Madiba, as the leader of the Youth League, then made a speech, in which he said he was looking forward to the day when he would be the first black president of the South African Republic. There was quite a lot of criticism about the speech. How could the leader of the Youth League, in the presence of his elders, make such a statement? He was a very cheeky fellow you see, Madiba. The government eventually crushed the Defiance Campaign by the introduction of very harsh laws, which provided even for whipping people engaged in defying laws. There were several cases in different parts of the country, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Port Elizabeth, where the leaders were charged and convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act.

The next demonstrations were scheduled for the 26th of June 1952, with volunteers who would defy certain laws. Madiba was the volunteer-in-chief. I was a teacher then in Port Elizabeth, where the first volunteer was Raymond Mhlaba. I went all over the country organising. I was arrested in Port Elizabeth. I was also an accused in the Kimberley trial, which was called Regina vs Sesedi. Mr Sesedi was the leading figure in Kimberley. We were convicted but the sentences were suspended. That was 1953. Then Madiba, I and many others were banned from participating in the activities of the ANC. There's an interesting case – it's the only case of its kind – where the Law Society tried to prevent me from entering the profession because I had been convicted in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. And it actually sets out what activities I was engaged in, in 1952. The Law Society adopted similar tactics against Mandela, who was already an attorney. We ignored the bans and just carried on working, right through the Treason Trial, which began in 1956 and ended in 1961, up to the adoption of the armed struggle.

After the Defiance Campaign, we had several strategy meetings. One outcome of those strategy meetings was that, now that the ANC was a mass movement, we needed to change the Xuma Constitution of 1943 to reflect that. The 1953 ANC conference in Queenstown adopted several resolutions on the new constitution. They also adopted resolutions on the proposal by Z. K. for a Congress of the People[1], which would draw up a Freedom Charter[2]. Most of the conference was taken up by a squabble that had broken out in the Transvaal, by a group calling itself *Bafa Begiya*, led by Macdonald Maseko and Mrs Molapo challenging the leadership of Mandela, then the president of the Transvaal ANC. These people had been expelled in the Transvaal and were appealing to the National conference. They also complained that the

1 The Congress of the People was held in Kliptown, Johannesburg, on the 25th to 26th June 1955. In 1953, Professor Z.K. Matthews, a renowned leader of the ANC, put forward a proposal to a conference of the ANC urging it to call on all the people of the country, "irrespective of race or colour", to draw up "a Freedom Charter for the democratic South Africa of the future". On June 25, 1955, 3,000 delegates from all over the country assembled in Kliptown.

2 The Freedom Charter was signed at the Congress of the People, and it set out the minimum demands of the people. This document subsequently became the key document of the Congress Alliance.

ANC was veering too much to the left and that the ANC must not abandon the nationalist philosophy. But it was a sort of mix up of complaints, some of them local. One statement that was read to the conference alleged that Mrs Molapo was very hostile to the president of the Transvaal. She was a very beautiful woman. So she gets up at the conference to deny that she was hostile to the president, and she says: "The president has been at my home and not only that *ebile a siya katiba yahae ko lapeng*" (he left his hat at my house). She later became a prominent leader of the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress[1]). She was the sister of Dr. Seth Makotoko, a well-known doctor in Lesotho. She went back to Lesotho eventually.

It's amazing how much time that dispute took, in a conference which was otherwise very constructive and brought in ideas for the Congress of the People and for drawing up a new constitution. Immediately from that conference, we embarked on the campaign for calling the Congress of the People and for the collection of people's demands. The Freedom Charter actually contained a whole lot of demands collected from people answering a call and was collated by [Lionel] "Rusty" Bernstein[2]. It was called "the Call" precisely because it was a call to the people of South Africa to express their views on the future South Africa. And, as you know, this ended up with the Congress of the People meeting on the 25th and 26th of June 1955 in Kliptown, where the Freedom Charter was adopted.

Incidentally, a lot of writers speak of the Freedom Charter as an abridged version of the Charter. In fact it's the full version. I did a commentary on the Freedom Charter for the Morogoro Conference[3]. Some people think that's the Freedom Charter but, in fact, that was just my own commentary. So you have the Freedom Charter adopted, you have Commissioner Rademeyer condemning the Freedom Charter as a communist document, and you have threats from the government from the moment the Freedom Charter is adopted to do something about this organisation. That came on the 5th December 1956, when arrests took place on treason charges based on the Freedom Charter as allegedly a plan for the replacement of the existing state by a new state or a people's democracy along communist lines. The prime minister then was Advocate Strijdom, who was a hard liner determined to crush the movement. They took their gamble of arresting all the leaders and charging them with High Treason. Curiously enough, he died suddenly in 1958 before the trial reached a conclusion. And, of course, Africans said this chap had attacked the movement, that's why he just fell down, dead.

1 The PAC was formed in 1959 following the breakway of a group of Africanists based in Johannesburg in opposition to the Freedom Charter and perceptions that whites were dominating the ANC.

2 Rusty Bernstein was among those arrested at Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia in 1963. There was very little evidence during the Rivonia Trial that Bernstein was a conspirator and he was found not guilty. After his release and subsequent re-detention he left the country.

3 The Morogoro Conference, held on the 25th April 1969 in Tanzania, led to a number of important changes in the liberation movement. For instance, it was decided at that meeting that membership would henceforth be open to all races. (For more detail on the Morogoro Conference refer to South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET) (eds), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, pp 573ff.)

The preparatory examination took up the whole of 1957 at the Drill Hall[1] in Johannesburg.

During the preparatory examination some significant events that occurred included the Alexandra bus boycott[2], a big and successful movement, and then the June 26th national strike against the trial, one of the most widely supported strikes. Of course, the fact that you had all the leaders in one place, forced to be there, meant that the strategies and planning were going on all the time. Some people ascribed the success of campaigns like the Alexandra bus boycott to the fact that you had all the leaders in one place, able to communicate with each other all the time. You felt that this was the core that was going to continue the struggle until it achieved its victory. Many of the people who carried on with the struggle were actually from the Treason Trial.

When the Suppression of Communism Act was passed, I was already writing about the importance of Marxism. I first wrote an article in 1949 to the *Guardian* in which I was praising the Chinese Revolution, which I thought was a major influence. I was saying: "It looks like this is the path that we will have to follow." Remember, we had just had the excitement of India's freedom in 1947 and then in 1949 you had this big event. So there was a lot of interest. And, of course, there was great excitement among oppressed people, particularly at the way the Chinese victory had been achieved through armed struggle. At the time, it looked like it was a combination of nationalism and Marxism. My article criticised the South African Communist Party for not following the national outlook of the Chinese in implementing communist policy. I was attacked by Professor Jack Simons in a reply to that article. I was moving in the direction of Marxism, but I had not yet become a member of the Communist Party when it was banned in 1950.

I was still at Fort Hare in 1950 when Mrs Motlana wrote to Sisulu and said: "I think Joe Matthews is nothing now but a communist." She wrote Sisulu a private letter to that effect. Her impressions were given credence by the lectures I was giving to my political class at Fort Hare, which by the way included Robert Mugabe. I hope I didn't influence his present policies! Mugabe, Silundika, Frank Mdlalose and others were part of my political class. I was teaching Marxism, the history of Africa and so on. Mugabe has a very high regard for me, arising out of those experiences. Even when I left the College, after I graduated in 1951, I kept the link with the Youth League at Fort Hare.

[1] The Drill Hall is a former military barracks (used by the military until 1992) and was used as a courtroom during the 1956 Treason Trial because of the large number of accused in the trial.

[2] On 7 January 1957, workers from Johannesburg and Pretoria townships refused to ride to work in buses owned by PUTCO (the Public Utility Transport Corporation) following a one-penny (25 per cent) increase in fares effective that day. This spontaneous act of defiance marked the start of a three-month period during which an estimated 70 000 workers boycotted the buses. During the 1957 Alexander bus boycott the people of Alexandra walked nine miles from the township to town and back every day. Their demands were finally met. Other solidarity boycotts followed the Alexander bus boycott after the ANC called on its branches nation-wide to support the action. For instance, in Worcester in the Western Cape, a bus boycott committee enforced a month-long boycott of buses.

As a political commentator and analyst I think I take after my father, who was the author of *Africans' Claims*, and was very good as an analyser and interpreter of the intentions of the oppressors, telling the people what the oppressors were going or trying to do. He was very good at that. That was the one reason why a lot of people really held him in high esteem, not so much as a political activist, but for his analytical role, which we must never underestimate, because otherwise we would have been sort of blind people. We differ from many African movements because of this capacity to analyse accurately, even when we were weak. At least, we gave a correct analysis and I think our intellectuals have played an outstanding role.

I was recruited to join the Communist Party by Moses Kotane[1] in 1957 during the Treason Trial. Because it was operating underground, you were invited to join. By that time I had written so much and, according to Michael Harmel, I had become "the leading non-party Marxist" in the country. So it became awkward that a person who was giving intellectual leadership was not a member. I was advocating something that was not quite what the party was putting forward at the time. My viewpoint was that Marxism mustn't be a European phenomenon; we must make it indigenous and root it in African realities. We must analyse Africa more and not base our activities on analysis from other countries and other situations. My main argument was that, if you wanted socialism to be influential in Africa, you had to make it an indigenous idea, using Marx. Eventually, that idea even influenced the Soviets, although initially they looked askance at this, thinking that it was a sort of nationalist deviation. But what I advocated became the

[1] Moses Maune Kotane was born in Tampostad in the district of Rustenburg, Transvaal, on August 9, 1905. At the age of 13 he went to look for work and when he was 15 years old he entered for the first time the door of a classroom – a mission school which he attended for 2 years and then qualified to be a "full member of the church". Afterewards he worked as a "kitchen-boy", a "house-boy", a milkman and an employee of the West Rand Consolidated Mines. In 1928 Kotane joined the ANC and the Bakers' Union which was formed by the Communist Party after the collapse of Kadalie's ICU. A year later he joined the Communist Party. On September 1, 1929, he was elected Chairman of the South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions and in the same year he was instrumental in the formation of the League of African Rights – a united front of all progressive organisations: the ANC, ICU and other African groups. In 1931 Moses Kotane became a full-time functionary of the CPSA: first as a compositor of the party paper *Umsebenzi* (the Worker) and in 1938 rose to the position of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, a post he held until his death. In 1946 he was elected member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC. At the Lobatse conference, O.R. Tambo indicated to Moses Kotane that he needed his assistance in the work of the External Mission. After consultation with the ANC leadership inside the country, Kotane left for exile.

trend so that by the time the programme of the Communist Party, the *Road to South African Freedom*[1], was unveiled, it was my point of view which then began to dominate the thinking of the party. At first they didn't want, for example, to call the party journal the *African Communist*. I said: "No, you can't just call it the *Communist*; it must be a communist who is analysing here, on this continent." Later it became a popular journal all over the world. I used to write for the journal a lot under my pseudonym, A Zanzol.

I had got married in 1951 to a Durban girl and then I started working in Durban as an attorney in 1958. I left Port Elizabeth, where I was articled, in 1956. When the arrests took place, I was already in the Natal provincial set up. We had regular ANC meetings in the province and joint meetings with the Natal Indian Congress. I was with Chief Luthuli[2] almost all the time, drafting his speeches and so on. It was a great privilege to work with the chief, who had come into prominence when he replaced A. G. Champion[3] in 1951 as president of the Natal ANC province. The following year he was nominated as national president of the ANC at a very chaotic conference that was held in Johannesburg. A lot of leaders were banned at the time but were meeting secretly somewhere and then you had to have messages going back and forth from the conference to the leaders for ratification. On the issue of elections, the leaders were completely divided about who should replace Dr Moroka. Some said Mandela must replace Moroka; others backed Dr Njongwe, who had become very famous because of the success of the Defiance Campaign in Port Elizabeth; and then you had Chief Luthuli. When the leaders couldn't agree, nominations were put to the floor and over 50 nominations for president were proposed. Chief Luthuli, who was elected in the end, was a well-known chief from Groutville, who had been a member of the Native Representative Council (NRC)[4] until it was abolished in

1 The *Road to South African Freedom* was the programme of the SACP published in 1962.

2 Chief Luthuli was born in 1898 in Natal and was educated in mission schools and at Adam's College where he later taught until 1936. In answer to repeated calls and requests from the elders of his tribe to come home and lead them, he left teaching that year to become chief of the tribe. He was not a hereditary chief as his tribe had a democratic system of electing its chiefs. He joined the ANC in 1945. In 1946, he entered the then Native Representative Council. At that stage, however, the Council had for all intents and purposes come to its end. It was a useless and frustrating talking shop that had been brought to a standstill by the protest of members who questioned the brutal and savage methods employed by the police in dealing with the African miners' strike on the Witwatersrand in August 1946. It had also called upon the government to abolish all discriminatory laws and demanded a new policy towards the African population. It never met again and was eventually abolished by the government. Chief Luthuli was elected Provincial President of the ANC in Natal in 1951. He was deposed as chief in 1952 and elected President-General of the ANC the same year. He was banned and confined to the Lower Tugela area from 1952 till his death on 21st July 1967. His first ban for two years was in 1952. It was renewed in 1954. In 1959 he was banned for a further period of five years, which was again renewed when it expired.

3 Born at Tugela in 1893, Champion worked as a mine clerk in Johannesburg after serving in the police force, organised his fellow clerks into a union, and joined the ICU in 1925. Starting from scratch, he built the union into a powerful organisation in less than two years.

4 The Natives' Representative Council was an African advisory board established in 1936 to replace the limited voting rights for Africans in the Cape Province. It had no powers and dissolved itself in 1946 after one of its members described it as a "toy telephone".

1951. He was a great footballer and was for many years in the football associations and used to hold meetings that ended in the early hours of the morning. He was a man of the church and a teacher. When my father was teaching high school at Adams, he was also teaching at Adams but at the teacher-training college. He was extremely eloquent, really one of our great speakers, a master of the English language. A real man of principle! I used to accompany him from the office to the station to catch his bus to Groutville. I would look at this man, who was just like everybody else. He could at any moment have said to someone: "Can you drop me in your car?" He had hundreds of people ready to do that, but he walked and travelled by bus. He was really a very humble man and a gentleman. He continued as president until he died in 1967.

I started working in Durban at about the time the PAC broke away from the ANC, but you have to go back to the adoption of the Joint Planning Council report in 1951. I was then national secretary of the Youth League. Mandela was the president. When that report was adopted and we decided on the Defiance Campaign, there were some people who were unhappy, although it was not clear what they were unhappy about. A. P. Mda was one of them. They started a duplicated journal in which articles were written by someone called "Africanos". Those who knew his writing style – you know our styles can't be hidden – suspected that "Africanos" was Mda. A network of chaps linked with this "Africanos", such as T. T. Letlaka, were beginning to constitute a group. Most of these Africanist chaps didn't participate in the Defiance Campaign, most notably Sobukwe and John [Nyathi] Pokela,[1] on the grounds that they were teachers. They were both teachers at Standerton.

Now, when Professor Sibusiso Nyembezi was appointed professor at Fort Hare in 1953, Wits wanted someone to replace him. Nyembezi had started at Wits as a language assistant to Professor Doke. Then he only had his BA, with distinctions in African languages and English. He did his master's, then his doctorate at Wits. Doke contacted my father and said: "Isn't there someone like Nyembezi who can come as a language assistant and, at the same time, take advantage of the opportunities to study?" So my father recommended Sobukwe, who moved from Standerton to become language assistant at Wits in 1954. The PAC thing really took off at the 1955 national conference, where Sobukwe; Potlako Leballo[2], who was then working for the

[1] John Nyathi Pokela was born in the Eastern Cape in 1923 and educated at Healdtown and Fort Hare. Pokela became a teacher and an active member of the ANC Youth League. Strongly influenced by the nationalist thinking of A. P. Mda, he joined the Africanist faction of the ANC in the 1950s, and after fleeing to Basutoland (now Lesotho) in 1963, he served on the presidential council of the PAC in exile. In August 1966 he was arrested in South Africa, apparently after being tricked across the border by a police agent. He was tried and convicted of sabotage and served a 13-year prison sentence on Robben Island.

[2] Potlako Kitchener Leballo was born in 1924 near Mafeteng, Basutoland (now Lesotho). In 1940, while a student at Lovedale, he concealed his age and enlisted in a non-European transport unit of the South African Army. After the war, he returned to his studies and became an organiser for the ANC Youth League in Lovedale. Following a student strike he was expelled, but completed his training course at Wilberforce Institute and took up teaching in the Transvaal. Strongly influenced by the nationalist views of Anton Lembede and A. P. Mda, Leballo continued to be active in Youth League affairs, and after the Defiance Campaign, his home in Orlando Township became a gathering place for partisans of the Africanist faction. By 1954, Leballo had seized leadership of the Youth League in the Orlando East Branch, and *The Africanist* began to appear regularly, carrying his strongly worded attacks on the ANC leadership. Throughout a series of expulsions and reinstatements by the ANC, he retained his hold in Orlando and carried many of the branch members with him into the PAC in 1959. Leballo became PAC national secretary. Following the 1960 Sharpville massacre, Leballo was sentenced to two years in prison, and on his release in 1962 was banished by the government to a remote area of Natal. Using the argument of his birth in Basutoland, he successfully appealed for permission to leave South Africa. In August 1962 he went to Maseru, where he and other released leaders began efforts to reconstruct the PAC.

United States Information Service; Josias Madzunya in his eternal overcoat, he was always in an overcoat, a rain coat; and others went and caused a lot of trouble over the Freedom Charter. They caused such disruption that the conference couldn't complete its agenda, so it was adjourned and the meeting was resumed in April 1956 in Soweto. That is where the chaps who called themselves the Africanist group broke away formally from the ANC, when they were outvoted on the issue of the Freedom Charter. But they only formed the PAC in 1959. Between 1956 and 1959, they were known as the Africanist group and used to get a lot of press publicity in the *World*. That's really how they got the PAC formed. They had their first conference in December 1959 in Lesotho, where Sobukwe addressed them.

I will tell you something about Sobukwe's address. I'm one of the few people who know that that address was copied word for word from Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's address at a meeting of the Ibo state union in 1949, a very brilliant speech. At Fort Hare I used to get the *West African Pilot,* which was Azikiwe's newspaper, and the *Accra Evening News* from Ghana. The *West African Pilot* carried Azikiwe's speech in full. And in 1959, when the PAC was founded, Sobukwe virtually comes out with the whole speech, without acknowledging that it was Dr Azikiwe's speech. That's how they started but, of course, they didn't last long because when the ANC was banned in April 1960, the PAC was also banned. So they never got a chance to really establish themselves in the country, because four months later they were banned. That is the reason why the PAC never took off.

The absurd thing happening in the country during the period 1956 to 1961 is that you had a trial, the Treason Trial, at which accused leaders were extolling the virtues of non-violence, when the movement outside of the trial was beginning to question the validity of the method of non-violence. Gradually you got an apparent divergence between what was being defended at the trial and what was being said outside the trial. And, of course, after the trial and after the Pietermaritzburg conference to protest against the establishment of a republic, Mandela eventually expressed the general view questioning the validity of the non-violence tactic that had been employed until then. This caused a lot of consternation, naturally, because remember that the organisation was banned but now people wanted a fundamental change of policy and anything done by the ANC was based on conference resolutions. How were you going to have a conference? The issue was discussed in detail at a meeting held on the farm of the Indian sugar magnate, Walter Singh, presided over by Chief Luthuli. Sisulu, Mandela, all these people were banned but they attended this meeting. It was that meeting which took a very peculiar decision, which came to haunt us and still haunts us today. The meeting couldn't agree on whether to embark on the armed struggle. So the older leaders, like Z. K. and Chief Luthuli, said: "Alright, look, the ANC is not going to embark on an armed struggle. But if you chaps want to embark on an armed struggle, you can do so and we won't condemn your efforts." This resulted in a very

dangerous situation, where you had the official policy that was not for an armed struggle[1] and you then had an organisation established called Umkhonto we Sizwe, which embarked on an armed struggle. The haunting question then was: "Which political organisation established the military body?" The dilemma was not settled until Tambo took over the leadership outside the country. But the manner in which the decision was reached to embark on the armed struggle sowed considerable confusion because you had thousands of ANC members who did not know what the policy of the organisation was. Men were going around, such as Joe Modise[2], recruiting people on the authority of the "High Command" of Umkhonto we Sizwe, in a situation in which the organisation itself had not taken a formal position to support an armed struggle. I remember the Reverend Calata asking my father: *"Yintoni le* High Command?" (What's this High Command?). And I think a lot of the mistakes, such as infiltration of Umkhonto in the beginning and other disasters that occurred, are due to this dilemma.

A lot of people don't want us to discuss this dilemma because they say: "If you say that, you are saying Umkhonto we Sizwe was illegitimate." Our answer is that anywhere in the world where there is a revolutionary situation, and organisations are banned, it is impractical for people to want to call a conference to regulate the activities. Certain people have to take the initiative and go ahead. But the difficulty all this posed was: What do you say outside the country? What does Tambo say to the public in exile? Does he say the ANC policy is non-violence or does he say the ANC policy is armed struggle when Chief Luthuli in Groutville says that no such decision was ever taken? So, from a historical point of view, this is something that we have to examine. What were the consequences of this dichotomy, this hiatus between the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe?

When Tambo took over after the leadership had been sent to Robben Island, he arbitrarily closed this gap by saying the armed struggle was the armed struggle of the ANC, and that was it. Now if you are a purist, of course, you can challenge him and say he had no right to make

[1] Early in June 1961, leaders of the ANC held secret deliberations where a crucial decision was made: after half a century of non-violence, the policy of the ANC must change. The main organisation would continue its underground organising, and would remain non-violent, but a select few members of the ANC would unite to undertake controlled violence. Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) was formed. Sabotage was to be their first form of action. Umkhonto we Sizwe announced its launch on the 16th of December 1961 with a series of bomb explosions in a number of major cities.

[2] Joe Modise participated in the very first operations ever undertaken by MK, and during the sabotage campaign was charged by the High Command with the establishment of MK infrastructure in the regions (particularly Natal and the Eastern and Western Cape). He spent two years working underground, setting up MK cells and sending recruits out of the country for military training. Modise was instructed by the high command to go into exile early in 1963. His task: to get training himself, to oversee training of recruits sent out of the country and their safe return, and to arrange ordnance supplies from the socialist bloc to the liberation movement. He was based in Tanzania. Modise underwent training in the then Czechoslovakia in mid-1963 and later in the Soviet Union. By 1965, the seven top MK commanders inside South Africa had been arrested at Rivonia. Wilton Mkwayi took over the leadership of MK. After his arrest, Modise was appointed army commander. In the following years, Modise established bases in Tanzania, Angola and Uganda. He oversaw training programmes in the Eastern Bloc, Cuba, Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, China and the former GDR.

such a call. We made an attempt to correct this – some people say it was a lame attempt – and called a conference in 1962 at Lobatse in Botswana.[1] We got large numbers of delegates from inside the country and then those that were in exile. We came together and Govan Mbeki[2] was chairing. For two days we sat there deliberating and we regard that as a legitimisation of the decision that was taken to establish Umkhonto we Sizwe. But, as I say, you get many purists in the ANC who say: "But that was not a representative conference of the ANC. It was these set of people who were invited to come to the conference. It was not delegates who were elected by their branches." So these facts must be historically placed, because you got people like Chief Buthelezi, for example, who were going around at the time, saying that no such decision was ever taken to embark on armed struggle, opposing the armed struggle on the grounds that it was not Luthuli's policy and saying: "I spoke to Luthuli and he said that no such decision was ever taken." So the non-revolutionary elements in our society very often take advantage of this. My belief and that of O. R. and others was that we must face the issues and say this is what happened and these are the decisions we took and then challenge somebody now to say we were wrong. But we mustn't hide the dilemma that arose in the ANC in exile.

I had left South Africa in 1960 for Lesotho. You see, what we had decided after the banning was that we needed a number of people who would have freedom of movement. The advantage with Lesotho was that after a year I qualified to get a British passport. So I became the traveller

1 The Lobatse conference was held in Bechuanaland in October 1962 because the ANC was banned and could not hold meetings in South Africa. It presented an opportunity for leaders in exile and those still inside the country to meet. It was at this meeting that the decision to embark on the armed struggle was communicated to the membership of the ANC for the first time. The main objective was to 'consider the measures required to give a new impetus to organisational work in pursuance of the decision to make preparations for armed revolutionary struggle'. The external leadership could not formally establish itself, as the internal leadership was still in office, albeit underground. Moreover, being in exile was a wholly new experience for the ANC, which did not yet have visible and viable international networks. The relationship between the internal and external leadership was severely hampered by the South African government's repression and growing pressure on neighbouring states to deny assistance to the liberation movements. Finally, exiles were scattered throughout Africa, Europe and the United States, which made coordination of activities a daunting task.

2 Govan Mbeki was born in the Transkei on 9 July 1910. After completing matric he went on to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree and a teaching diploma at the University College of Fort Hare which he completed in 1936. His teaching career was short-lived. By 1938 he had abandoned the idea of a career in teaching and back in the Transkei devoted himself to local politics and writing. By 1941 he was actively involved in a number of local and regional organisations such as the Transkei Voters Association, Transkei Organised Bodies, and the Transkei Territorial Authorities General Council, the Bunga, as it was commonly known, in the Transkei. In 1954 he joined the editorial board of *New Age*, which was to be the only national newspaper serving the liberation movement for the next eight years. Together with Ruth First and Brian and Sonya Bunting and the other members of the editorial board, Govan Mbeki played an immensely important role in ensuring that the pages and columns reflected the conditions of the black peoples, their demands and aspirations. He was immersed in the practical politics of mass political mobilisation, organising branches of the ANC, publicising the movement's policies. He was chairman of the ANC in the Eastern Cape, and places like New Brighton became synonymous with ANC militancy. At the same time he was an active member of the underground Communist Party. Govan Mbeki became one of the key figures of the underground leadership. It was in this capacity that he was arrested at Rivonia and later sentenced to life imprisonment.

who could go out, come back, go where the leadership was in exile, come back to Rivonia and other places and report what was happening outside. So I was a link between the exiled people and those who were inside. I did a lot of that, as a British citizen, with a passport and everything. You know, I participated in the underground conference of the Communist Party in 1962. I even attended the International Communist Conference in 1960 where the Sino-Soviet dispute was discussed, came back, and reported to the comrades what had happened at the conference. When the OAU was formed in 1963 I was there; came back, and reported what had happened. So, up to the time of the Rivonia arrests in 1963[1], I was able to move all over the world and keep the internal leadership fully informed of developments. In fact, at the last meeting we had at Rivonia, I warned the leadership that I felt uneasy about the place. I just said to them: "I don't like the length of time we have been in this one place." They said: "We have, in fact, moved all the documents, everything, and we are about to move from this place." That was just an instinct but I felt that someone was watching us. And it turned out to be true. They had surveillance on the place for quite some time before the arrests took place. I was shocked when they were arrested at the same place. I really was shocked because I was assured that they were moving from there.

Mandela had already been arrested for leaving the country without documents in 1962. I travelled with him across Africa. Umkhonto had been formed already and the big issue from then on was: Where were we going to be based? Where were we going to get military training? Who was going to support us? So Mandela and I were going around to all the different countries where we thought it would be possible to obtain this support. Of course, it had to be in Africa. We had to have a place in Africa. A lot of countries were very sceptical at the time, even Tanzania, because they didn't have the means, the resources. The OAU had not yet been formed and, therefore, we didn't have the advantage of the Liberation Committee of the OAU[2]. So it was quite a trip to win support for the change of policy to armed struggle. There were countries which rejected our approach, like Sweden, who said they could only give humanitarian aid but they couldn't support an armed struggle. When Mandela came back he was arrested and

[1] The Rivonia Trial followed the arrest of several leaders of the Congress Alliance at Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia in July 1963. In the trial that followed, Nelson Mandela, who had been captured in August 1962, was also brought from prison where he was serving a sentence of five years for his activities in organising the 1961 strike. Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, and others admitted that they were guilty of sabotage and preparation for guerrilla war. They denied, however, that a decision had been made to begin guerrilla activity. For eleven months after the raid, the underlying question in the trial was whether or not they would be hanged, which would have transformed them, as heroes of the African opposition, into martyrs. Mandela, Sisulu and Mbeki, the most prominent leaders of the ANC (other than Luthuli) who were still inside the country, were members of the National High Command of Umkhonto. Hundreds of documents and other evidence of subversion were found at Rivonia and at two other sites. Many of the documents were in the handwriting of the accused. On June 11, 1964, Judge Quartus de Wet found Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki, and others guilty, and on June 12, 1964, he sentenced them to prison for life.

[2] In May 1963, the summit of independent African states in Addis Ababa, which established the Organisation of African Unity, resolved to speed up the liberation of African peoples still under foreign or white rule. One of the first OAU structures was the Liberation Committee, responsible for coordinating assistance from African states and managing a special fund set up for that purpose.

sentenced to five years' imprisonment. And then when the Rivonia arrests took place, he was joined with the others for planning Operation Mayibuye[1].

To garner support for the armed struggle, therefore, was an uphill battle which the end of the decade found us still fighting. In 1968/69, bodies like the World Council of Churches were getting very agitated. The churches were against violence. I went to the World Council of Churches conference in Uppsala, which they have every ten years, to canvass support. But more importantly, in 1969 I went to the Notting Hill Consultation[2] in London, where I really put the case across for the armed struggle in South Africa. That led to the formation by the World Council of the Programme against Racism, which gave us a lot of support. People like Bishop Alpheus Zulu, who was one of the vice presidents of the World Council of Churches, had to be convinced themselves that we were on the right path and that the church couldn't stand aside. I said to them: "You fellows established resistance movements against Nazism. You bombed people; you sabotaged trains; you killed people. And now you want to prevent us from fighting in the same way against apartheid. You Europeans are inconsistent. When it suits you, you are the most violent people and then, when we have to fight for our liberation, suddenly you say that this is philosophically unacceptable for Christians." I said: "That's not unacceptable." I had hit them really hard. Then they wanted me to be the Director of the Programme against Racism. I said: "No, I can't." So they appointed a Hollander – they had already done a first-class job of building up that Programme against Racism. It was quite an ideological struggle. I was supported a great deal by the African-American ministers, who were being influenced, of course, by the Black Power movement in the United States.

Before all that, Tambo had to move from London, especially after the Rivonia arrests, to settle in Tanzania first and later in Lusaka. Mazisi Kunene stayed as London representative. The headquarters of the organisation were in Morogoro, Tanzania. We then had to decide that we were now the leaders of the ANC, because we couldn't continue saying we were exiles and that the decisions were being taken by a leadership at home, on Robben Island. It was no longer possible to talk of a leadership inside the country. So the first decision we took was that we were

[1] In late 1962, at a meeting of MK's High Command in Johannesburg, Govan Mbeki and Joe Slovo were instructed to draw up a plan to take the armed struggle beyond the sabotage phase. The result was Operation Mayibuye. The first part of the plan was premised on the acknowledgment that "very little, if any scope, exists for the smashing of white supremacy other than by means of mass revolutionary action". The document went on to argue that since prevailing conditions made "the possibility of a general uprising leading to direct military struggle unlikely", that general uprising would have to be "sparked off by organised and well-prepared guerrilla actions" on the model of Cuba. To accomplish this, a plan was proposed whereby four groups of 30 people each would be simultaneously landed by sea or air in South Africa. The groups would then split up into platoons of 10 each and they would establish base areas from which to attack and to which to retreat. Guerrilla units would already have been set up in the four regions identified by the plan: Port Elizabeth to Mzimkulu; Port Shepstone to Swaziland; North Western Transvaal bordering Bechuanaland and Limpopo; and North Western Cape to the South West. The strategy was based on the intention that the external forces would find at least 7 000 men in the four main areas ready to join the guerrilla army. The plan concluded with a set of detailed logistical proposals. (Refer to Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol 3, pp 760-768.)

[2] The Notting Hill Consultation was a meeting of the World Council of Churches at which the question of assisting the liberation movements was considered.

responsible for the destiny of the ANC and that we assumed responsibility for the organisation in all its aspects. That was the first fundamental strategic decision. Now it might sound like an obvious decision, but in an organisation like the ANC, people would say: "But you are self-appointed. You haven't been elected by the conference of the ANC." And we had to say: "Now, look man, these are the realities of the situation that faces us. The most we can have outside the country is consultative conferences. We can't call a regular conference of the ANC in terms of the constitution. But we will consult our people, as widely as possible. But we have to take a decision on the question of leadership. Otherwise the organisation will disintegrate." So in January 1965, we had to take the decision that we were the leadership.

The group that was working under the leadership of Tambo included Moses Kotane, J. B. Marks, Tom Nkobi, Joe Modise, Tennyson Makiwane, Themba Mqotha (otherwise known as Alfred Kgokong), and Duma Nokwe. Moses Mabhida[1] was first in Prague but subsequently joined the people in Tanzania. Later, Alfred Nzo[2], Robert Resha and Johnny Makatini[3] joined the group. I joined them when I was expelled from Lesotho. The British expelled me from all the three protectorates at the same time. They waited until I was on a trip outside the country

[1] Moses Mbheki Mncane Mabhida was born on October 14, 1923, at Thornville in the district of Pietermaritzburg, Natal. Moses Mabhida started going to school in 1932 and benefited from several years of study, interrupted by periods during which he had to work as a herd-boy for one shilling a week. One of his teachers, the outstanding political leader, Harry Gwala, influenced him into joining the ANC and the Independent Trade Union Movement and also explained to him the vital role played by the Soviet Union during the Second World War. In December 1942, Moses Mabhida joined the Communist Party. After the Defiance Campaign of 1952, the Pietermaritzburg District Committee of the Communist Party suggested that Moses Mabhida should give up his job and start working full-time for the trade union movement. He started with the Howick Rubber Workers' Union and the Chemical Workers' Union in Pietermaritzburg, Durban and other parts of Natal.

[2] Alfred Nzo was born in Benoni in 1925 into a family of five children. After completing his matriculation certificate, he entered Fort Hare in 1945 and registered for a BSc degree. After joining the ANC Youth League at Fort Hare he became active in student politics. He left Fort Hare in his second year of study. After returning to the then Transvaal, he qualified as a health inspector in 1951. He lived and worked in Alexandra Township. Nzo became the chairperson of the Alexandra branch of the ANC in 1956. In 1958 he was voted onto the regional and national executive committees of the ANC. This was largely due to his work in organising the Alexandra bus boycott of 1957. Alfred Nzo became a full-time worker for the ANC when he lost his job as a health inspector because of his political activities. In 1962 Nzo was placed under 24-hour house arrest. In 1963/64 he was detained for a period of 238 days. In 1964 the ANC ordered him to leave the country to work for the movement outside South Africa where he took up posts in various countries including Egypt, India, Zambia and Tanzania where he represented the ANC. At the Morogoro Conference in 1969, Nzo was elected to the position of secretary-general of the ANC.

[3] Born in Durban on February 8, 1932, Johnny Makatini attended high school at Adams College, Natal. After matriculation he trained as a teacher and taught in the Inanda area. Rather than serve under the Bantu Education system, he resigned from the teaching profession and registered as a part-time law student at Natal University. He devoted the rest of his time to organising the people as an activist of the ANC, becoming a key youth and student organiser around Durban and in the rural areas of Natal. He was actively involved in all the ANC campaigns of the period and was arrested on numerous occasions. Makatini was one of the principal organisers of both the historic Pietermaritzburg Conference of March 1961, which was addressed by Nelson Mandela, and the highly successful anti-Republic strike of May 1961. In 1962, he was among the first group of volunteers from Natal to be sent out of the country for military training.

and then issued a proclamation, which meant I couldn't return to Bechuanaland, Basutoland or Swaziland. At the beginning of January 1965, my family was still in Lesotho and they had to pack up and leave. By that time we had already established the National Executive Committee as the top organ of the ANC.

Then the next issue that really came up sharply was that we recognised that, historically, any movement faced with a difficult struggle had to have a world power supporter. We looked at the United States War of Independence and asked ourselves: Would these colonists have won against Britain without the support of France? Now, France was a feudal state, completely different from the people they were supporting. But France backed the independence movement because of its rivalry with the British. So we said, it's not a question of ideology. It's a question of practicality. We knew that African states, generally speaking, were too weak. They didn't have the military resources to support such a plan. People have no idea of the cost of a struggle like this. If you take one rifle, and you are training a chap for nine months, do you know how much ammunition, just ammunition, that fellow requires? You are talking of thousands of rounds of ammunition, just for one chap. So the cost of establishing an army was prohibitive and, therefore, you had to be speaking of a power that could do it. As I say, we looked at historical analogies and became convinced that you had to have some power or other backing you, otherwise you wouldn't be able to launch a sustainable armed struggle. So we took a decision – it might look like an obvious decision now – that, as trading partners of our country, the West was not going to support our armed struggle. But we had the Soviet Union as the other power. So we had to go to the Russians.

Then we had to take other decisions. Alright, we said, Africa can be our base. They are willing to be our base, and we need training facilities they are ready to provide. But the equipment and so on will have to come from somewhere else. Then we also had to look at who our strategic partners in the struggle were. The Algerian struggle had just been won; they gained their independence in 1962. We thought, because of their experience and because of the relations we had with them from the period of Bandung in 1955[1], Algeria would be our main base in the Arab world. They had the necessary prestige in the Arab world. And because of their struggle, they would have a particular attitude to a movement which was fighting an armed struggle. We decided also that a country that was very committed to our struggle was the German Democratic Republic, whereas West Germany had become a main ally of apartheid. So to link up with East Germany seemed a logical thing for us to do. We didn't forget that India was a big power with historical links to our struggle and, therefore, although they may not be able to participate in supporting us with arms, there were many other things India could do.

[1] The first Asian-African Conference, held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, brought together delegates from 29 Asian and African countries to devise ways and means of securing and maintaining peace by eliminating all causes and sources of war, and devising ways in which Asian and African countries could cooperate. Leaders of the ANC, Moses Kotane and Molvi Cachalia, also attended the conference as observers. But the conference provided the ANC with the opportunity to connect with the leaders of these countries.

One of them was medicine, which India could provide. If you look at our history, you will find that our movement never ran short of things like drugs and medicines. Then there were other countries, like Bulgaria, which supplied us with food and textiles. We looked at the Scandinavian countries and said, although they had rejected our armed struggle, they were prepared to give humanitarian assistance. So we decided to strengthen the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) under Canon Collins[1] and urged these countries to support that fund. We never received money for the armed struggle from the International Defence and Aid Fund. Their job was to particularly support the legal struggle inside South Africa. Almost the entire legal struggle inside the country was financed by IDAF. Of course, we had to disguise the source of our funding and send the money through other countries, through the churches and so on. We had a very big network which was kept alive until about 1993/94 when we closed down IDAF, which had become very widespread and reached every corner of South Africa. A lot of lawyers became rich on proceeds from IDAF. By and large their fees were paid by IDAF. They didn't do it free of charge, they were paid. The socialist countries never gave support to IDAF because we said let the West be the ones who give to that fund, and socialist countries would give directly to the movement and not to humanitarian organisations. We kept to that strictly.

The point I'm trying to make is that there was a host of decisions which had to be taken and the luck we had was to have a very brilliant chap at the top. I sometimes feel sorry for other movements who have strange people at the top with tantrums, who are egotists and think of themselves first. We had a brilliant, selfless man, totally devoted to the struggle. You have to admire the man for what he did. I used to bring him letters from his wife, Adelaide, who had remained behind in London to look after the family. One week, two weeks: "*Hawu* O. R., this letter is still here, on the dressing table." He says: "I haven't opened the letter." Then I say: "Open it." And then he says: "I know what's in there; it's complaints." He was interesting and full of humour. Sometimes I feel uneasy because we've got a book by Mandela and about Mandela, but we haven't got a big book about Tambo, the real chap behind the success of our

[1] Canon John Collins of St Paul's Cathedral, London, became involved in the struggle in Southern Africa when he supported the mission in 1949 to the United Nations of the Reverend Michael Scott, a mission undertaken on behalf of the persecuted Herero people of South-West Africa (Namibia). Throughout 1950, Canon Collins organised meetings in London, and raised money in order to publicise the illegal role of South Africa in the United Nations mandated territory, and to help those suffering persecution there. At the same time, Canon Collins embarked upon his campaign to rouse the consciences of people in Great Britain and throughout the world to the evils of apartheid. Canon Collins's first active intervention with South Africa came in 1952 during the Defiance Campaign. The prisons began to overflow, and when the ANC appealed for help, outside support came from Canon Collins. With his small struggling organisation, Christian Action, he immediately set about raising a fund to support the families and dependants of all those who had gone to prison. This was followed by the arrests of 156 leaders in 1956. Canon Collins pledged himself and his organisation, Christian Action, to raise enough money to pay the legal fees, to support the families and dependants of those on trial and to help to rehabilitate them in the event of their acquittal. In 1958, Canon Collins merged the various Christian Action funds into a new British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa. In June 1964, the Defence and Aid Fund became the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF) with affiliated committees from a number of different countries. The two main aspects of the work of Defence and Aid were the provision of legal defence and the provision of aid to the families and dependants of those defended in the courts. In 1966, the South African government banned the Defence and Aid Committees inside South Africa, through which IDAF channelled most of its aid.

struggle. Now we were at fault in a way, because by organising a campaign for the release not of prisoners, in general, but of Mandela, in particular, we created a myth. We were responsible for creating that myth. Sometimes people would ask us abroad: "Why are you talking about Mandela? What about Sisulu? What about Mbeki? What about the others?" But because in Tambo you had a completely selfless man, who had no personal ambitions or love of positions and so on, and because Mandela was his friend, he never tried to stop us from this campaign of making Madiba a big figure. You know Madiba has made a few millions out of his book and we have nothing on Tambo. I really believe that this aspect of getting the balance right about the contribution of individuals like Tambo, Sisulu, Kotane, Marks and others is most important. We are going to lose the essence of Tambo, Sisulu, but especially of Tambo, whose contribution has been so outstanding. Yet he remained humble to the end, able to talk to anybody. He was a really extraordinary man, exceedingly democratic.

The movement in exile in the 1960s was plagued by problems that Tambo resolved in the most diplomatic and democratic manner imaginable. We were beginning to get uneasiness in our camp at Kongwa in Tanzania, where we had chaps who were trained militarily. The first group was trained in Morocco. That's before the independence of Algeria, and Makatini started in Morocco as a representative before moving to Algeria. We had chaps trained in Egypt; we had a lot of chaps trained at Odessa in the Soviet Union, in the Ukraine. Highly trained chaps! They had arms but they were sitting in the camp. They began to get restless. "People are saying we are sitting here. Why are we not fighting?" The other matter which came up was if you talked about fighting, the question was: How are you going to reach South Africa from where we were, because between South Africa and us lay other countries, Botswana, Rhodesia then under Smith, etc.?

There was also this other question that I raised sharply: What's the difference between us and the Zimbabweans in terms of targets? South Africa was the mainstay of the Rhodesian state, their economic supporters. They gave that state all kinds of aid when the rest of the world imposed sanctions. So the question was: Aren't we also fighting against those who are supporting them, which is our own country, South Africa? The logic was to link up with the Zimbabweans. And that's how the idea of an alliance with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) came about. Of course, we enjoyed close and cordial relations with Zimbabweans. I would say a third of Zimbabwe is intermarried with South Africans. Our girls are full up in Zimbabwe and so on. People have married. So we considered these many commonalities, which suggested that we should go into an alliance with ZAPU. It wasn't just with ZAPU. We did also feel – this was an Algerian suggestion – that all the authentic liberation organisations should work together. We agreed they should work together because we had also noticed discrimination by the Soviet Union, which gave more attention to the ANC and South Africa because of the communist connection. The South African Communist Party was engaging the Russians to support the struggle in South Africa and the Russians trusted the ANC, which had Moses Kotane, the secretary-general of the Communist Party, as its treasurer. They called the other movements "national democratic movements" and they were a bit reluctant to support them. In fact, some of those movements got more support from the Chinese than from the Russians. So we thought, to close this gap and to make the socialist countries

support all the movements, and not just the ANC, we should have some sort of alliances and visible co-operation amongst ourselves. Still, right up to the end, the Russians never really paid as much attention to these other movements. I once protested to the Soviets and said: "It's a scandal that you can give $10 000 to FRELIMO and then give $900 000 to the ANC. How do you fellows justify this?" I wrote a memorandum saying that our struggles were as interlinked as the unholy alliance of Portugal, South Africa, and Rhodesia[1]. So these movements must be supported, all of them, for the sake of the South African struggle, and they should not pick and choose.

Well, we formed this alliance with ZAPU and jointly started a journal that I ran with the secretary-general of ZAPU, Nyandoro, a joint ANC/ZAPU circular which published stories and articles to explain what the alliance was about. But there were people who criticised the move to go back to South Africa, through Rhodesia, and fight jointly with our ZAPU allies. They said: "You have spent a lot of resources to establish a South African guerrilla movement and the next thing you put in jeopardy the lives of those people in another country and not in South Africa." They said: "These people should be going right through to South Africa, in some clandestine manner, and they should fight in South Africa and not be fighting in a neighbouring country like Rhodesia." The other criticism was that ZAPU had not done any political work on the ground to get support for what we were going to do and, therefore, the masses may even be hostile when the enemy responded to our infiltration into Rhodesia. But anyway we decided that we must move in and we had to move in through a narrow path of the Victoria Falls. I was watching them. O. R. felt that the thing had now started and would not stop.

The 1969 Morogoro Consultative Conference was a result of a terrific disappointment in which we as the leadership were at fault. After Wankie[2] and Sipolilo, for a brief period some of our chaps were imprisoned in Botswana but were eventually released through the intervention of the ANC and Kaunda and so on. That was Hani and his group. Other guerrillas were captured and imprisoned in Rhodesia. When these chaps returned to Lusaka, they were never received in a military way. There were no medals; there was no official ceremony for them. They just returned and the same routine carried on. Day in and day out, people were just there, retraining or eating and sleeping. Terrific disillusionment then set in because we found ourselves in the same situation as before with nothing happening. Then there were all sorts of suggestions to send chaps for retraining and so on. They would go, retrain for a few months, and come back to

[1] The so-called unholy alliance symbolised the co-operation between the South African white minority regime, Ian Smith's government after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965, and the Portuguese colonial authorities in Mozambique and Angola.

[2] The Wankie Campaign arose from discontent in ANC military camps following a number of failed attempts to infiltrate South Africa through Mozambique and Botswana. Talks on a military alliance between MK and ZIPRA began in 1966, and in 1967 the leaders of the ANC and ZAPU agreed on a joint military campaign. The plan was for a group of MK cadres to join a larger group of ZIPRA cadres with the object of one group of MK cadres, together with members of ZIPRA, establishing a series of bases inside Rhodesia that would provide MK with a trail for infiltration, and sending a group of MK cadres through Rhodesia into South Africa. Neither objective was achieved, and many of the cadres were killed, captured or managed to make their way back to Zambia. (For more details about the campaign refer to SADET (eds), 2004, pp 479ff.)

the same routine in the camps. Therefore, there was tremendous disillusionment. We had a chap called Bonga and then another one who later turned out to have been a spy, who stirred things up and accused the leaders of travelling up and down in the world. Hani then became the leader of a group that prepared a memo, full of statements of these grievances.

Now, a lot of the things that were said in the memo were untrue. For example, they were giving the impression that Moses Kotane was very hostile to the guerrillas, which was untrue, as Kotane, whom they had never met as a group, had suffered a stroke and had been lying in hospital in Moscow. We heard a number of other things, like the suggestion that leaders were living a better life than the rank and file. That was also not correct, especially at Morogoro where the conditions were the same for everybody. But some of the grievances were accurate, like this whole thing of not having a reception for the men when they returned. In military terms you would have had medals, you would have had an acknowledgement of what people had achieved. That was not done.

Now the reaction to the memo from people like Modise, who was the commander of MK, and others was that these people should be treated in a military fashion; that they were soldiers who had signed the oath and, therefore, if they were guilty of this type of thing, they should be brought before a court marshal and shot. But others argued that we must acknowledge that we made a mistake. Furthermore, in the ANC there had always been a tradition that when there was a problem at leadership level, or at any level, you would go back to the masses. You would consult the masses. My view was that we should go back to the masses, people we had outside, and enable them to express their grievances and their views about what we should all be doing. O. R. was very quiet and we were not sure what his view was until we had a very big meeting at one of the camps in Zambia, which O. R. addressed. He made a very eloquent speech, in which he then announced that we would be having a consultation in Morogoro for people to express their views about what had happened, what was happening and what we should do in the future. So letters were sent out to everybody, those in Umkhonto, those outside Umkhonto, [and] representatives in different parts of the world. Literally every individual abroad was consulted.

I was the co-ordinator, organising the conference with Duma and J. B. Marks. We were sending out invitations and receiving all the grievances and all the statements from people. Then Ben Turok wrote a very cheeky letter to which I replied, and it's reproduced in one of the books by Tom Karis. It was a long letter in which Turok lashed out at the leadership and made quite a lot of what we considered totally unfair attacks on the leaders, without offering any solution. I analysed his letter and replied to every point he made. He was the one who pushed the idea that the leaders were living in luxury whilst their people suffered. And, of course, if you looked at that Morogoro place, and you looked at where O. R. was sleeping and called that luxury, it was obvious Turok didn't know what he was talking about. He himself lived in Dar es Salaam, where he was working, not in Morogoro. So my reply was to the personalised approach he adopted.

Other people brought up genuine grievances, however, and expressed their frustration at the lack of a way forward and at the organisational weaknesses that we suffered. The organisation had not been founded as a solidarity organisation in exile. You had to make it a proper instrument for organising and leading a revolutionary struggle and that meant the methods, the way in which we were organised would have to change. There was also the issue of the way we were using our people outside, whether we had a really non-racial approach. That was a big issue of what do you do when you have the Indian community, the white comrades and so on, not in leadership positions. So, really, there were two aspects, one was to deal with the issue of the various grievances that people had. But we didn't want to stop there. We wanted also to analyse the South African situation and to see how we should organise ourselves to expand the struggle.

The spirit that emerged from Morogoro transformed the organisation in many ways. Documents were produced, like the strategy document prepared mainly by [Joe] Slovo[1] and corrected by Duma and myself, although Slovo always told everybody that he was responsible for the document. But he made a lot of mistakes in the document, which we had to put right. For example, there was a popular notion on guerrilla warfare put out by Che Guevara that you could not have a revolution unless the objective conditions were right to organise such a revolution[2]. Now, that is so un-Marxist. It's an idealistic position which pays no attention to the material factors that have to operate. And what we thought was that Slovo was confusing things. He was thinking of a revolutionary situation in the classic sense of what happened in Russia, where the revolutionary struggle was protracted and you didn't have the conditions for an immediate overthrow of the existing regime through an insurrection. So we put that right. We corrected that part. Then there was another part where he said that without the support of the Indians and the Coloureds it would be impossible for the Africans to achieve their liberation. We corrected that as well and said it would be difficult but not impossible.

1 Born in the village of Obelai, Lithuania on May 23, 1926, Joe Slovo's family emigrated to South Africa when he was eight. Slovo left school after Standard 6 in 1941. He went to work as a dispatch clerk at SA Druggists, joining the National Union of Distributive Workers. As a shop steward, he was involved in organising a strike. He joined the SACP in 1942. He volunteered to fight for the allies in World War II and later became very active in the Springbok Legion. Between 1946 and 1950 he completed a BA LLB at Wits. In 1949 he married Ruth First. Both First and Slovo were listed as communists under the Suppression of Communism Act and could not be quoted or attend public gatherings in South Africa. Slovo was a founder member of the Congress of Democrats. He was arrested and detained for two months during the Treason Trial of 1956. Charges against him were dropped in 1958. He was later arrested for six months during the State of Emergency declared after Sharpeville in 1960. In 1961, Slovo emerged as one of the leaders of Umkhonto we Sizwe. In 1963 he went into exile on instructions from the SACP and ANC. He spent his exile years in the UK, Angola, Mozambique and Zambia.

2 Che Guevara or el Che, was an Argentine-born physician, Marxist revolutionary, politician, and leader of Cuban guerrillas. As a young man studying medicine, Guevara travelled throughout Latin America, bringing him into direct contact with the poverty in which many people lived. Through these experiences he became convinced that only revolution could remedy the region's economic inequality, leading him to study Marxism and become involved in Guatemala's social revolution. Guevara became a member of Fidel Castro's paramilitary 26th of July Movement that seized power in Cuba in 1959. After serving in various important posts in the new government and writing a number of articles and books on the theory and practice of guerrilla warfare, Guevara left Cuba in 1965 with the intention of fomenting revolutions first in the Congo-Kinshasa (later named the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and then in Bolivia, where he was captured in a CIA-organised military operation.

We thought that to say it would be impossible would mean that we were totally dependent on the support of Coloureds and Indians for victory in our struggle. We didn't think that was correct. There were a number of other things which we put right. But it was an excellent document. Then there was a document on International Affairs by Duma, on aspects of international struggle. I produced a commentary on the Freedom Charter, quite a longish commentary. These were the basic documents.

Then I also prepared a chart of how our organisation should be reorganised in order to move away from solidarity to an effective liberation movement in exile. The ANC hadn't really developed in that direction. There was also a suggestion that we should not only have a National Executive Council but we should also have a Revolutionary Council, which would concentrate on the armed struggle and they wouldn't get involved in other work of the organisation. In the Revolutionary Council we could put in anybody. We were not confined to Africans and ANC members. We were now broad enough. We brought in Dadoo; we brought in Slovo and others. We also discussed the issue of alliances, such as the alliance with ZAPU. We discussed the alliance with the SACP, which for the first time was formalised at Morogoro. Many people are not aware that the alliance with the SACP was formalised at Morogoro in 1969. The new position was that anybody could participate in the exile movement or its organs and that we could no longer confine the cadres in exile to only Africans, which had been the position before, when the whites, for instance, had to work in the anti-apartheid movement but couldn't work in the ANC office. So we changed that, so that everybody could participate. Eight people were elected and others were co-opted by that eight to constitute the executive of the ANC.

I prepared a document called “The Development of the South African Revolution”, which appeared in *Sechaba*. That document became the Bible of the organisation and was issued in pamphlet form everywhere. It gave people total confidence that they would succeed. A road map! Many chaps, even the internal chaps like Sydney Mufamadi, tell me that that document gave them a total perspective and made people very confident that no matter how long the struggle took, it would end in victory. The document spelt out how that victory would actually occur and that's exactly how it developed. Morogoro, as I say, invigorated people and was a turning point. We never again experienced the despair which had come after the excitement of Wankie.

For a short while I was in the Revolutionary Council, before I left in May 1970 to go to Botswana, now independent. We had discussions where we revisited the problem of not having a route to South Africa. I suggested that I had a base in Botswana and, instead of sitting in Lusaka or Morogoro,I would go there and get the policy of the government there changed so that we were able to support revolutionary movements. So I had a discussion with President Seretse Khama and said: “I think I should return, I should go to Botswana.” I was in the president's office as his secretary and helped shape foreign policy in support of the ANC and other liberation movements in the region, which also altered the whole political outlook of Botswana.