



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

Speech by **PALLO JORDAN**  
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**OLIVER REGINALD TAMBO**  
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*Celebrating  
the year of  
O.R Tambo*



Permit me firstly to congratulate the University of Fort Hare on its centenary. This university, built on the banks of the Tyhumie River, perhaps most graphically illustrates the conflicting yet concurrent agendas that began unfolding in this part of our country after the 1790's. One of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's greatest social scientists once described colonialism as both a "destructive and constructive force", and went on to say that its most constructive dimension was how it changed the victims of colonial aggression.

As the name says, this was once the site of a fort, which along with others, like Fort Cox and Fort Armstrong had once been frontier posts demarcating the territory the indigenous African people had retained from that which they had lost to an expanding European presence in their midst. Commencing at the Gamtoos River, as one travels from the south-west to east, each major river one crosses represents what was once a frontier. Indeed this is a region that witnessed the longest sustained primary and secondary resistance to colonial aggression as well as the most intense economic, social and cultural interaction among the peoples of the Cape, prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mission station at Gwali, not far from here, where the first book in the Xhosa language was printed, encapsulates the complimentary agendas of an African Christian community pursuing entrée into the modern world, and European missionaries, often serving as the reconnoitering party of powerful colonial interests. Though it is often understated, the educational institutions first established in this region were joint projects, that entailed African converts and missionaries cooperating in the conception, construction and management of these. In addition to land grants on which to build, convert communities raised funds which were matched by contributions from the mission churches, to build schools.

The "frontier" was thus a site of destruction as well as reconstruction, as the more far sighted among the indigenous people, like the legendary Prometheus, stole the fire of post-enlightenment technology, scientific knowledge and cultural goods from their colonizers to employ for their own purposes. Along with the other historic schools of this region, the University of Fort Hare became the incubator of intellectual and political traditions integral to the emancipation of southern and south-eastern Africa from the yoke of colonialism.

Among the best representatives of that outcome is the man whose life's work we are commemorating today.

Born on October 27<sup>th</sup> 1917, in the Mbizana district of eastern Mpondolond (eQawukeni) in the Transkei, Oliver Reginald Tambo began his school years at an Anglican mission school before going to St Peter's Secondary school in Johannesburg. His exceptional performance won him a scholarship from the Transkei Bhunga. He used it to enroll at what was then the University College of Fort Hare, where he attained a bachelor's degree in science, that qualified him to teach mathematics and science. From 1943 until 1947 he taught these subjects at his alma mater, St Peter's in Johannesburg. He gave up teaching to study law in 1948 and established the first African legal partnership with Nelson Mandela in December 1952.

The hand of the National Party's repressive apparatus pre-empted a second career change in December 1956. Two days before the Bishop of Johannesburg was due to prepare him for ordination as a priest, Oliver Tambo was arrested with 155 others on charges of High Treason on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1956.

Oliver Tambo chose his path when he joined the ANC after completing his studies at Fort Hare. The Second World War raged abroad as a small group of young people, all members of the African National Congress, banded together under the leadership of Anton Lembede. The initial group included William Nkomo, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Reginald Tambo, Ashby P. Mda and Nelson Mandela. In September 1944 they founded the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL).

From small beginnings, with 60 members concentrated around the city of Johannesburg, they set themselves the task of transforming the African National Congress (ANC) into a mass organization.

The "old guard" ANC leadership, reared in the tradition of constitutional struggle and polite petitioning of the White minority government of the day, they argued, were proving inadequate to the demands of national emancipation. The "old guard's" strategy, these "young Turks" asserted, rested on a misconception of the actual power relations in South African society. The tactics they had evolved failed to galvanise the disenfranchised black majority. In opposition to the old guard, Anton Lembede and his associates espoused a militant African Nationalism grounded in the principle of national self-determination which, they asserted, would draw its strength and motivation from the unlettered millions of ordinary working people in the cities, towns and the countryside of South Africa.

At the 1945 annual conference branch delegates elected Anton Lembede and Ashby Mda on to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC. Two years later, in 1947, Oliver R. Tambo was also elected a member of the NEC. At the ANC's 1949 annual conference a Programme of Action, inspired by the ANCYL, was adopted as official policy.

The adoption of the Programme of Action marked strategic departure for the ANC. It was devised to take politics to the millions of ordinary blacks whom they hoped would, through such mobilisation, become conscious agents of their own emancipation.

The Programme of Action was premised on the notion that the disenfranchised majority would only win their freedom by their own exertions. Deceptive policies designed to coopt the black elite and the violent repression of struggles like the African Mineworkers Strike of 1946, the ANCYL argued, demonstrated that the White minority would not willingly surrender power. It was therefore necessary to devise the means to wrest power from it. The organized strength of the disenfranchised - who laboured in the factories, on the mines, on the rich agri-business farms and, invariably, also served the Whites as servants in their homes - would be the instrument to attain freedom.

It was this group of young leaders (most of them in their early 30s) and the thousands of branch members who supported them, who prepared the ANC for the decade of the 1950s, that witnessed non-violent ANC-led campaigns - strikes, civil disobedience, boycotts, mass demonstrations and marches.

To ensure the implementation of the programme, the membership of the ANC returned a number of these younger men, among them Oliver Tambo, to the NEC. Walter Sisulu, a founding member of the ANCYL, was elected Secretary General. A man with a reputation for greater militancy, Dr J.S. Moroka, became President at the ANCYL's initiative. Nelson Mandela was first elected into the ranks of the NEC at that same 1949 annual conference.

### **The ANC and its Programme of Action.**

Between 1912 and 1939, the principal alliance the ANC pursued was with the liberals among the white political elite. Of secondary importance were alliances with the coloured and Indian political elites. Liberals, like Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, then serving in Jan Smuts's United Party cabinet, were also cultivated in the belief that their strategic positioning close to Smuts could leverage reform. The failure of the liberals to sway white opinion, demonstrated by Smuts's hesitant response to the 1946 Fagan Commission, discredited that strategy. The ANC's 1949 Programme of Action signaled the adoption of a strategy reliant on the political action of the people themselves.

That strategy was first tested during the Defiance Campaign of 1952, when the ANC, in alliance with the South African Indian Congress, mounted a mass civil disobedience campaign. The Defiance Campaign, led by the Youth Leaguers – Nelson Mandela was appointed volunteer in chief - transformed the ANC into a movement of struggle. The campaign demonstrated the viability of an alliance among the organised bodies of the three oppressed communities. It had also drawn in some white opponents of racism. Tactical alliances around specific issues also encouraged united action. The Freedom Charter became the common programme of the Congress Alliance that resulted from joint participation in the Defiance Campaign.

But it was a strategy fraught with the contradictions that erupted in the Africanists' walkout, to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), in 1959.

Commencing with the passage of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, during that decade the National Party government turned the law into a formidable instrument of repression. Ministers acquired powers to ban, proscribe and restrict the movements and actions of individuals, organisations and entire communities. Their decisions were not subject to judicial review in the law courts.

Repression culminated at Sharpeville in March 1960, when 69 peaceful demonstrators, were massacred by police in an anti-Pass protest. Nine days later, on 30<sup>th</sup> March, the White minority government instituted a State of Emergency, the first of its kind in peacetime. Before dawn on 31st March, in well-coordinated raids,

the Security Police arrested thousands of people who were detained, without trial, for up to five months. On 8<sup>th</sup> April 1960 the ANC and PAC were declared illegal organizations.

A few days prior to March 30<sup>th</sup>, the ANC instructed Oliver Tambo to travel abroad to establish an external mission for the ANC to mobilise international support for the struggle.

As head of the ANC's organisation in exile, Oliver Tambo travelled widely, appearing before the UNO and host of other international bodies. He spearheaded the setting up of the South African United Front (SAUF) with the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) in 1960. After the breakup of the SAUF, he became the international spokesperson of the South African liberation movement enjoying the confidence and respect of world statesmen he met in every part of the world.

In March 1961, 1,400 delegates gathered for an All-In-Conference at Pietermaritzburg under the ANC's inspiration. Nelson Mandela delivered an electrifying address in which he challenged the White minority government to convene a national convention, representative of all South Africans, to thrash out a new constitution based on democratic principles. Failure to comply, he warned, would compel the disenfranchised to observe the planned inauguration of a republic at the end of May with a mass stay away from work.

In a predictable response the regime mobilised Police reservists and army units. The preventative detention of political activists was instituted. A year after banning two liberation movements, the regime had effectively demonstrated that its response to even peaceful protests would be repressive violence.

It was after May 1961 that the ANC leadership set up Mkhonto weSizwe - the Spear of the Nation - (MK) as the military wing of the ANC. Nelson Mandela was appointed its Commander-in-Chief, with Raymond Mhlaba as his deputy and Walter Sisulu as National Commissar.

Mkhonto weSizwe (MK) went into action on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1961 by launching simultaneous attacks on targets in three major cities - Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban. From that date the incidence of planned acts of sabotage rose steadily, reaching a peak of 177 acts across the country by 1964.

The leadership of the ANC established MK as the nucleus of a liberation army during 1961 and began to build it into a fighting force during 1962. The not that the time had arrived for the turn to the armed struggle found proponents in all the liberation political formations. As the ANC and its allied Congresses were setting up MK, the PAC was establishing its own armed wing. A splinter from the Non-European Unity Movement and APDUSA, calling itself the National Liberation Front, set up the Yu Chui Chan Club to prepare for armed struggle. Even the more radical members of the Liberal Party linked up with a group of Johannesburg leftists to found the Armed Resistance Movement (ARM).

Nelson Mandela's mission to Africa in 1961 -62 entailed a search for training facilities for MK. He personally underwent training in Algeria and Ethiopia. The first MK units received their training in China and the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) or East Germany. Training was offered by a number of African states, including Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Ethiopia. Tanzania gave the ANC land on which to build its own camps to house trained fighters and to train recruits. MK planned to send units of fighters abroad for training then infiltrating them back into South Africa. The High Command executing this strategy was surprised at a secret meeting at Liliesleaf Farm, Rivonia on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1963. Among them was the commander of the first batch of MK fighters trained in China, Raymond Mhlaba. Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni, two other members of that first group, had also been arrested a few days earlier.

The Rivonia arrests were followed by a wave of repression that featured brutal, mind-breaking tortures and murders in detention. The regime managed to dismantle the underground structures the movement had built to sustain trained combatants. Though Wilton Mkwayi made an attempt to rebuild it, the ANC's underground army was effectively closed down when he, Mac Maharaj, David Kitson and John Matthews were put on trial in 1964. Bram Fischer's efforts to revive an SACP underground ended with his arrest in 1965.

The repression had placed the ANC in a position it was unaccustomed to. Though state surveillance and Security Police raids had become a regular feature of political life after the Police raids of 1946, political activity per se had not been illegalised. Even as a banned movement the leadership were concerned to maintain a division between illegal activity that could result execution and mere membership of an illegal organisation.. At its 1962 Lobatse Conference the ANC was reluctant to take ownership of MK and the legend that MK was a separate organisation was maintained.

The movement's external mission, led by Oliver Tambo, was oriented towards diplomatic work and regarded itself as the agent of a leadership inside South Africa, to whom it was accountable.

After 11<sup>th</sup> July 1963, that ceased to be true.

### **Tambo Takes Charge.**

The Rivonia arrests and the repression that followed thrust upon the very ample shoulders of O.R. Tambo the responsibility of leading the ANC in exile as well as at home. Oliver Tambo rose to that challenge with a quiet dignity, immense determination and an unflagging perseverance

In a candid appraisal done during 1969, "Mayibuye", the ANC's newsletter commented:

"The External Mission had, however, been sent out to undertake certain specific tasks, vital but supplementary to the internal struggle. The total command of the people's army and the prosecution of the armed struggle was not, initially, one of these tasks. The leadership vacuum resulting from the destruction of the internal military structure saddled the External Mission with this additional task. In the course of time and by an accumulation of experience it became clear that the External

Mission as then constituted was not organisationally geared to undertake the urgent task of undertaking the People's War. As the External Mission attempted to play this vital role many weaknesses began revealing themselves, weaknesses inherent in the contradiction between organisation and method of struggle. Gradually these weaknesses became magnified and harmful affecting discipline and morale, and unhealthy tendencies crept into the Congress."

While it was relatively easy to recognize the basic weakness, addressing it would be the greatest challenge the ANC faced over the next two decades. The post-Rivonia repression imposed an unnatural silence on liberation political activity during the mid-sixties. Those liberation movement militants who were not detained or imprisoned were dispersed, with no organization or networks to relate to. The perception that the regime's secret police were everywhere and had informers, agents and helpers in every nook and cranny of society neutralized attempts to coordinate political action. Fear, self-doubt and demoralization seemed to have taken hold among the people.

Oliver Tambo understood the challenge facing him as the leader on whom history had thrust such a solemn responsibility was to stimulate the South African people to reclaim their self-confidence. For its effectiveness, international solidarity would have to play an important though supplementary role to the revival and reconstruction of the ANC, as a political movement with a military capacity, operating inside South Africa.

The liberation struggle necessarily involves two sides in contention. Grave setbacks, like the Rivonia arrests are inevitable as are temporary reverses, partial victories and defeats. The struggle consequently has cyclical features with moments of high activity followed by inactivity and quiescence. The responsibility of the ANC and its allies, Tambo maintained, was to sustain the continuity between the previous phases of struggle, those unfolding in the present and those to come in the future, by acting as the custodian of the best traditions and the political experience of the people in struggle.

To rebuild the people's self-confidence required their involvement in struggle because the oppressed people are not in day-to-day confrontation with their oppressors. Unless they resist, continue to resist, fight back and engage in struggles big and small, they are not likely ever to rise up. A demoralized people, forever on their knees before their masters, are unlikely to fight for and win their freedom. But by fighting for small immediate gains, that low morale could be uplifted and the solidarity, so necessary for revolution, could also be nurtured.

There was a paradox in this approach to the politics of national liberation. Tambo, like his peers in the ANCYL, from the outset of his political career had always insisted that the oppressed people must be their own liberators. Yet he also maintained that organization was indispensable as the stimulant of mass political activity. Though it is the self-activity of the people that will bring freedom, they would not

spontaneously generate effective political action. The ANC's task therefore was to bridge this gap between the potential of the masses and their preparedness for struggle.

There was yet another paradox to which Oliver Tambo was always alert. Because of the nature of the oppressive system, the ANC had necessarily evolved as a broad movement, drawing support from a wide spectrum of social and economic forces. There were people who joined the ANC in order to attain the same rights as the Whites; others sought to secure recognition and equitable rewards for the skills they had acquired. There were others who supported the liberation movement because it would open the door to opportunities to rise to whatever heights their talent could take them. Entire communities and individuals had lost their lands in racist inspired land seizures, and they regarded the movement as the instrument to reclaim their land. Others sought the restoration of the dignity and grace of African culture. The movement counted amongst its supporters and members persons from the middle classes, the working class, the rural working poor, aspirant capitalists and entrepreneurs, as well as militant socialists and communists.

There are obvious tensions among these components, but they all had to be accommodated. Oliver Tambo, perhaps better than many others, understood that it was not possible to suppress and silence the contradictions inherent in such a diverse movement and political constituency. He mastered the art of giving political leadership to such a movement by the creative management of these contradictions, permitting open and free debate within the movement's ranks, so that every proposed strategy was weighed and tested in the light of reason.

Under Tambo's leadership a continuous search for consensus, accompanied by an insistence on disciplined, united action was encouraged. But at times the demands of the armed struggle imposed the harsh disciplines associated with the military. The ANC's own Commissions of Inquiry later revealed that this had sometimes led to abuses and disregard for this sound practice. There were a few occasions when such skillful management failed, and comrades of long-standing had to be expelled from the ANC.

To fulfil its historic mission, Tambo recognized, the ANC would have to change and change in rather radical ways. Firstly, the external mission he had been delegated to lead had to change and be subordinated to the task of reconstructing the ANC as an organised presence inside South Africa. Between 1967 and 1990, the ANC operating from external headquarters, was called upon to co-ordinate the operations of its members and supporters, spread across the globe, with its activities inside South Africa.

The 1969 Morogoro Consultative Conference was convened not only to resolve the friction that had developed between the exiled leadership and the armed combatants under its command, but also to address a fundamental strategic problem. There was also growing social distance between the leadership of the ANC and its rank and file. The external orientation of the leadership at a moment when its focus should have been South Africa was in large measure responsible for that.

The Morogoro Consultative Conference was the first concerted attempt by the ANC leadership to retrospect and critically examine the movement's experience after July 1963. The conference's conclusion was that the ANC had to be transformed into a movement of South African revolutionaries, completely re-oriented to the prosecution of the struggle inside South Africa, while complimenting such efforts with external support. MK was explicitly and formally acknowledged as the armed wing of the movement. Outside South Africa the rationale for the continued existence of its alliance partners was irrelevant, so the Congress alliance activists would be absorbed into the ANC.

The Morogoro Consultative conference entailed the recognition and acceptance of a number of errors and tactical mistakes committed in the construction of the external mission and in the conduct of the movement internally after the ANC was banned. O.R. Tambo's readiness to grasp the nettle of self-criticism and rigorous introspection was one of the qualities that endeared him to the rank and file of MK. A Revolutionary Council, (RC), under the chairmanship of O.R. Tambo was created and it included among its members comrades drawn from the Congresses allied to the ANC since 1955.

The RC superseded the Congress Alliance and formalised the alliance between the ANC and SACP. Both organisations specifically undertook to actively prosecute the struggle inside South Africa and to re-orient the entire movement to focus on the internal reconstruction. The decision to open membership to all South African revolutionaries, irrespective of race, proved to be the most contentious.

More importantly though, the ANC emerged from Morogoro with a coherent strategy comprising the following elements:

- Making the ANC an organised presence among the people of South Africa while generalising among them an appreciation that revolutionary violence was not only necessary but could be successfully deployed against what appeared to be a formidable enemy;
- Inspiring self-organisation through every form of small or large organisation for active engagement in the struggle to overthrow the apartheid regime;
- Stimulating among the people an understanding that without their active support and protection the armed cadres of the movement could not hope to survive in the country; and
- Creating secure lines of communication between units on the ground and the leadership for purposes of intelligence, counter-intelligence and propaganda.

To succeed, the conference concluded, the armed liberation struggle would have to be built on four interdependent pillars. The first of these was:

- an **effective underground ANC organisation** capable of galvanising the people.
- such an underground could in turn stimulate **mass political mobilisation** to create an environment in which,

- **armed action** could be effectively conducted by MK militants who enjoy the support and protection of the people.
- The last pillar was **international solidarity** to isolate the racist regime from possible sources of support in the world community while mobilising material and moral support for the forces of liberation.

The strategy embraced in 1969 required a de-emphasis on the military aspects of the struggle and greater attention to grassroots matters around which small scale and ever widening struggles could be waged. A reconstituted ANC underground itself would have to refocus by transforming itself into the tribune of the people, offering leadership and coordination of local struggles so that they assumed national dimensions.

### **Revolutionary Strategy.**

The establishment of a military wing of the ANC-led alliance arose after agonizing debate within the leadership structures. Many were unconvinced of its necessity. Among the leadership of the South African Indian Congress there were committed Gandhists and the ANC's own non-violent tradition wasn't easy to discard. Seasoned leaders like Chief Luthuli and Moses Kotane expressed the fear that the transition to armed struggle might tempt comrades to neglect the un-glamorous organizational work they should be undertaking to effectively counter the effects of illegality. The compromise arrived at gave Mandela and his colleagues the ANC's blessing to establish MK as a separate body, once removed from the ANC, but subordinate to its political leadership. All activists, irrespective of race, who were committed to the liberation struggle were eligible to join MK which would have its own command structure. Such arrangements, it was hoped, would not unnecessarily compromise members of the ANC should they fall into the hands of the Security Police.

The African continent had experienced four modern liberation wars during the twentieth century. When fascist Italy invaded their country in 1935, the Ethiopian people did not meekly submit. Though Mussolini's well-armed troops easily overwhelmed the pre-modern Ethiopian forces in conventional battles and were able to seize the capital and impose their colonial administration, his troops and police were harassed and under constant threat from Ethiopian guerrillas operating from the hills. The Allied troops who arrived after 1941 occupied a country that was friendly disposed, thanks to the indigenous resistance.

In 1952, Kenya's Land and Freedom Army, caricatured as the "Mau-Mau" by Britain's psych-ops strategists, led the Kikuyu peasants in an armed uprising that was ruthlessly crushed. An attempt to seize independence from France by the Union of the People of the Cameroon met with a similar fate. The success of the Algerian armed liberation struggle earned its National Liberation Front (NLF) tremendous prestige among liberation fighters and progressive forces throughout the world.

In discussions with the Algerian leadership the while he was undergoing training, they had advised Mandela that, based on their own experience, it was unlikely that the ANC would defeat the apartheid regime militarily. However, their own armed struggle had precipitated political crises in France. In the last instance, they told him, it was both the fiscal and political costs of the liberation war that persuaded France to negotiate a settlement. The ANC too might arrive at the same situation.

Operation Mayibuye, the politico-military strategy document seized at Rivonia, offers some idea of the thinking of MK High Command during its initial phases. Proceeding from an assumption shared by virtually all liberation formations at that time, MK's commanders had planned to train an incubator compliment of senior commanders, who would become the trainers of recruits inside the country. Underground units would service them and link them to the political leadership. In pursuance of that plan Raymond Mhlaba and others had been dispatched to China during 1962. In preparation for their return rudimentary MK units were set up in the main urban areas. Variously disguised as sports clubs engaged in hiking, judo and mountaineering, they sent groups of recruits out of the country for training at facilities offered by Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Ethiopia. In the Western Cape a small farm, that could serve as a training facility, was acquired.

We can assume, from the evidence of Operation Mayibuye, that the MK command hoped it could safely infiltrate returning trained fighters to bases close to their homes where they would serve as the hubs of fighting units that would be networked across the country. Rural areas that had experienced armed rebellions during the 1950s, like the Transkei, Rustenburg, Zeerust and Lebowa, were deliberately targeted for recruits in anticipation of these areas serving as future guerilla bases. However, given the ANC's own urban constituency a large number of the recruits were seasoned industrial workers, young workers and students.

To be effective Operation Mayibuye would have required an underground organization that could furnish a system of safe houses, an ordinance corps for the supply, transport and maintenance of weapons and a logistics department with transport capacity to ensure the underground fighters were fed and sheltered. A signals corps, for secure communications, it was hoped, could be built from among the recruits trained abroad for that purpose.

There is evidence that plans for the creation of these were in hand by mid-1963. But the inconclusive discussions at Liliesleaf Farm suggest that some among the MK Command considered Operation Mayibuye over-ambitious and beyond MK and the ANC's capacity at that time. The Security Police raid of 11<sup>th</sup> July made all that academic.

Though a second layer of MK's leadership went undetected in 1963, Wilton Mkwayi's attempts to revive it after the Rivonia Trialists were sentenced faltered precisely because there was no effective underground network to sustain it. Bram Fischer's failed attempt to rebuild an SACP underground demonstrated how

severely the repression had impacted on the movement. The ANC was compelled to formally accept responsibility for MK as its military wing.

By the end of 1965 a substantial number of MK recruits had completed their training at military academies in the USSR. The African states we have already mentioned had offered infantry and Ranger training. Other former partisans from Cyprus, Algeria, Czechoslovakia and Italy had given specialized training in urban guerilla war. These trained combatants were now bottle-necked in camps in Tanzania and Zambia as a result of the Rivonia arrests. It was under these conditions that the ANC/ZAPU - MK/ZIPRA military alliance was concluded and went into action in July 1967.

From MK's perspective the objective of the 1967 campaigns was to create a corridor through Zimbabwe into the northern Transvaal, the North-western Cape and possibly into Natal. After splitting into two columns, one headed east towards the Zimbabwean interior, the other west, towards Matabeleland, where ZAPU had a long-standing following. But the Wange and Sipolilo incursions of 1967 - 8 uncovered a fundamental flaw in the planning of MK's strategists.

The leadership of ZAPU had given the impression that there was an organization to receive and assist the fighters once they arrived in Zimbabwe. Contrary to these claims, the two columns found there were no political structures on the ground for them to link up with in Zimbabwe. Worst yet, because there had been no preparatory political mobilisation of any sort, it proved easy for counter-insurgency forces to stage provocations by disguising themselves as freedom fighters and ensnaring potentially supportive rural communities in this fashion, thus sowing confusion amongst the people. They even attacked villages disguised as guerillas in order to alienate them from the genuine freedom fighters.

MK's baptism in fire during those campaigns was an object lesson that underscored the importance of the strategy that emerged from the Morogoro conference.

Von Clausewitz tells us that "war is not an independent phenomenon, but a continuation of politics by different means." He goes further and underscores that "war is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carrying out the same, by other means." Proceeding from those premises, the experience of the campaigns waged in Zimbabwe called attention to ANC's principal political weakness – the regime's success in dismantling the organisation inside South Africa and consequently being able to promote its own project of displacing the modernist national political formations with ethnic parties integrated into its "Bantu homelands" scheme. Reconstructing a national movement would require negotiating the shoals and reefs of "homelands" policy, without compromising the ANC's own historic of objective inspiring and articulating a national vision, based on the unity of the African people in the first instance.

Rebuilding the movement as an organized presence had to take account of a number of new realities. The first among these was how the regime had closed down the legal space for opposition. Apart from banning the ANC and PAC in 1960, the regime banned the Congress of Democrats in 1962. In 1965, the “Political Interference Act” banned all political formations that accepted whites and blacks as members, compelling the Liberal Party to disband. The Progressive Party of Helen Suzman chose to expel its Coloured and Indian members in order to safeguard its legality. The arbitrary powers of the Security Police had been greatly extended with provisions for detention up to 180 days that could be renewed at the discretion of the Security Police.

Despite this, by the late 1960s, black students at a number of campuses had seceded from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the Students’ Christian Movement to found the South African Students Organisation (SASO), seizing the opportunity offered by their relative freedom on campuses to extend the political space for opposition. After an unprecedented level of strike activity amongst the African workers of Natal in 1973, the self-organisation of semi-skilled black workers also slowly revived. During that first decade of the 1970s a thaw, initiated by black students and workers, was taking place. The apartheid regime’s own homelands project was also generating its own contradictions.

In order to lend dignity and a hint of credibility to its “Bantu homelands” policy, the apartheid encouraged the formation of political parties that would contest elections in these “homelands”. While the legislature in each “homeland” was structured to make them the instruments of the traditional leaders, even the limited political space this created could be used by anti-apartheid forces. Thus, during the the first elections in the Transkei, Prime Minister Kaiser Matanzima and his chiefly supporters could nonetheless form the government, even though they lost the popular vote. One of their first measures was to detain the leaders of the Democratic Party that had so humiliated them. In Natal the Prime Minister of the “KwaZulu homeland”, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, used the homeland as a platform to voice his opposition to the racist policies that the apartheid regime pursued. In the “kaNgwane homeland”, a party led by a “commoner”, Inyandza, went even further. Having won elections, as Prime Minister Enos Mabuza openly opposed apartheid and in time sought contact with the liberation movement.

In reconstructing its own underground the ANC necessarily had to relate to these emergent political and organisational trends. It would have to draw on them to renew its own cadreship and also devise methods of co-operating and engaging in joint action while safeguarding the legality of these political organisations. For the ANC, that decade entailed engaging with all the various forces committed to liberation – the NEUM, the PAC, the Black Consciousness Movement as well as various labour movement activists and liberals. In all such encounters, Oliver Tambo stressed that the important aspect was active involvement in united action on the ground inside South Africa, rather than wordy documents proclaiming unity.

Within the ANC leadership and the MK command the debate on strategy continued, but at its core was the issue of organisation. The morale of the oppressed majority had to be revived and the movement had to demonstrate that it was alive despite the reverses suffered during the mid-sixties. Extravagant and publicity catching events were staged for that purpose. Every leaflet bomb, every banner unfurled and every street broadcast by Radio Freedom proclaimed that the ANC was alive and still fighting. Operating from clandestine bases in neighbouring states like Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana, MK operatives and ANC organisers slowly built up the networks of contacts that over time were converted into solid components of an underground organization. Commencing in 1973, the ANC also began broadcasting to South Africa from Zambia and Tanzania. Radio Freedom, whose signature was a burst a burst of light machine gun fire, followed by the MK hymn, was broadcasting close to six hours of material, daily from various points on the African continent in 1989. By the time the United Democratic Front was founded in 1983, MK and the ANC had built internal networks responsible for intelligence, for simple news gathering, for logistics and for communications that linked its underground to headquarters outside South Africa's borders. The ANC's 1985 call to make South Africa ungovernable met with a positive response because the movement had re-established its authority among those fighting for freedom. The defiant unfurling of the ANC flag at public demonstrations attests to its wide acceptance as the banner of freedom. By 1987 the leadership felt sufficient confidence in these structures to inject a leadership corps into the country under the rubric of Operation Vulindlela.

### **International Solidarity.**

The experience of the initial delegation that set up the ANC's external mission had been most instructive to Oliver Tambo and his comrades. Their small party, comprised of himself, Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Ronald Segal had received a rather disappointingly mixed reception in Africa and among the emergent states of east Africa. Though Ghana was regarded as the pioneer of African freedom, when they reached Accra, O.R. was denied access to Kwame Nkrumah. [Some attribute that rebuff to the influence of George Padmore, then an unrelenting critic of the ANC.] Even in countries like Zambia and then Tanganyika (Tanzania after January 1964) the parties leading the charge in the independence struggle had in own their turns broken with a local ANC, and consequently looked on the PAC, whose experience superficially resembled theirs, more favourably than the ANC. Among other tasks, Tambo would have to win and retain the confidence of the leaders of Africa, especially those whose countries were closest to South Africa. But there were African states, like Liberia, that were indifferent to the liberation struggle. Others, like Malawi under the Presidency of Hastings Banda, felt compelled to cooperate with the apartheid regime. In other instances powerful western powers exerted influence to temper opposition to the Pretoria regime.

He encountered different problems in setting up a united front of South African liberation movements externally.

Like the ANC, the PAC had also established an external mission, led by two members of its national executive, Peter Molotsi and Nana Mahomo. In age and rank within the own organization, Molotsi and Mahomo were Oliver Tambo's juniors. By January 1961 a South African United Front (SAUF), to which both the ANC and PAC adhered, was actively campaigning in independent Africa and among other United Nations member states willing to lend an ear. The South West African National Union, led by Jariretundu Kozonguizi, also worked closely with the United Front because Namibia was then still a South African colony. With offices operating in Cairo, Accra, London, Dar-es-salaam and Rabat the SAUF mounted a successful demarche among Commonwealth countries to have South Africa expelled from that body in 1961. Tension in the SAUF arose after that initial success. By 1962 it had broken up and the two movements went their separate ways.

The ANC was much more successful in winning support amongst grassroots bodies in Britain. In 1959, responding to a call made by the ANC President Chief Albert Luthuli, a "Boycott South Africa" committee had been established among African and Caribbean residents of Britain. Steady campaigning among Labour Party clubs, student bodies and among conscientious liberals grew the support base of the committee. South African students and others who had left the country during the 1950s reinforced that initial small group. In March 1960, five days before the Sharpeville Massacre, the "Boycott South Africa Committee" adopted a resolution to set up an Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain, not only to campaign for a boycott of South African goods, but to mobilise support for the liberation movement. The British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) became the first among what would become a growing international solidarity movement. The Sharpeville Massacre on 21st March underscored the urgency of the deteriorating situation in South Africa.

Britain's links with South Africa as a former colony, made it possible to address the British public. After 1960, increasing numbers of South Africans, fleeing persecution or to evade the Security Police, arrived in Britain as political refugees. South African students continued to arrive to study at British universities and some of these too could be roped into solidarity work. The influence of the Anti-Apartheid lobby had gained could be gauged in March 1963, when Harold Wilson, the newly elected leader of the Labour Party, marched at the head of a massive anti - Apartheid demonstration, marking the third anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre. Though the government of Britain was among the last to impose sanctions on Apartheid South Africa, after 1963 no British politician could ignore the Anti-Apartheid lobby in Britain. As its influence radiated through society, opinion makers and virtually all public figures were compelled to respond to the issue of racial oppression in South Africa.

The strategy the ANC adopted under O.R.'s leadership was to isolate the racist regime through an expanding network of influence. That involved progressively convincing thousands of ordinary people that racism, and specifically South African racism was an important moral issue and one they had the capacity to do something about. Sport's administrators could influence whether or not a Whites-only team from South Africa should compete in an international match! The housewife shopping for her family could act by

refusing to purchase those juicy Outspan oranges. It was a strategy capable of mobilizing the thousands who disrupted the Springboks' New Zealand tour in 1981; the celebrities who demonstrated outside the South African Embassy in Washington D.C. in 1984; and European Parliamentarians, who established their own Anti-Apartheid network during the 1980s. The cumulative effect of all these small actions, in time, persuaded a number of Western politicians that their own constituents demanded action to end apartheid.

The role that the African-American church played in the human rights struggle in the United States had also had a positive influence on the international ecumenical movement. The World Council of Churches initiated its own Anti-Racism Programme in 1969 with an inevitable focus on South Africa. A multi-faceted relationship with inter-governmental bodies like the OAU, UNO, the ILO, non-governmental organisations, political parties and individual statesmen facilitated the ANC's influence spreading well beyond its immediate milieu. The ANC earned the respect of international bodies, statesmen and governments because of the conduct of its leader, whose stature grew over twenty eight years of relentless campaigning.

By the mid-eighties international solidarity sustained a host of ANC institutions. In addition to providing food, clothes and other essentials for its personnel in exile;

- Scandinavian and Dutch funds sustained the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, ANC school in Tanzania;
- Dutch NGOs sent canned goods and Dutch Army surplus to MK camps; every two years after 1978, an Italian "Ship of Solidarity" loaded with goods unloaded cargoes at Luanda, Maputo and Dar-es-salaam for the ANC;
- the Soviet Union, Cuba, China and India provided arms and other ordinance in addition to military training;
- volunteers from a number of English-speaking countries and the Netherlands actively participated in the ANC underground and assisted MK;
- funds raised in the US and Europe also helped to sustain alternative media associated with the democratic movement inside South Africa;
- a sustained campaign, spearheaded by African-Americans, pushed the Anti-Apartheid Act (triple A) through both houses of Congress.

### **The National Question in South Africa.**

The 1969 Morogoro Consultative Conference of the ANC characterised the system of national oppression as a form of colonial domination, differing from the other systems, because the colonized people and colonial state occupied the same territory. It identified the principal source of the conflict in SA at that time

as that between the colonized black majority (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) and the white minority colonial/racist state. The conference went on to say that contradiction could not be resolved by the colonial/racist state reforming itself out of existence. Consequently, it was only through struggle that the conflict could be resolved. But, because the colonized people and the colonial state occupied the same territory, the system of colonialism in SA would not end with the colonial state leaving the territory of the colonized country. To resolve the colonial contradiction in SA required the attainment of democracy, the dismantling of the colonial/racist state and the creation of a democratic state.

When the authors of apartheid were accustomed to stating their case in plain language prior to the 1960s, J.G. Strijdom, Malan's successor as National Party Prime Minister, unabashedly told the Whites-only Parliament in 1957:

“Call it paramountcy, baaskap or what you will. It is still domination. I am being as blunt as I can. I am making no excuses. Either the white man dominates or the black man takes over...The only way the European can maintain supremacy is by domination...And the only way they can maintain domination is by withholding the vote from the non-European.”

As spelt out by Strijdom, the National Question in South Africa entailed mobilizing resistance to that system of white domination. The system had evolved from the 1905 Native Laws Commission, the 1909 Act of Union, with its racist provisions denying blacks (or “non-Europeans” as Strijdom expressed it) the franchise.

The “*African Bill of Rights*”, that the movement adopted in 1923, was essentially a liberal-reformist document. At that time the ANC conceived of the struggle as essentially a civil rights struggle: extending of the framework of the 1910 Union constitution to include Blacks. The idea of overthrowing white minority domination and replacing it with a government representative of the majority was not part of its political vocabulary.

The ANC executed a radical break with that tradition during the 1940s. Inspired by the adoption of the Atlantic Charter of 1941, “The Africans’ Claims”, a programmatic document that the ANC adopted at its annual conference in 1943, recast the struggle as one for the universal human rights the Allies claimed were their objectives during World War II.

The Atlantic Charter, adopted by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941, focused on the principle of “government by the consent of the governed” and spoke of five freedoms, lending legitimacy to the objectives of the liberation movement. When it met in conference in Manchester during 1945, the pan-African freedom movement inaugurated by Sylvester Williams and W.E.B. du Bois back in 1900, unapologetically called for colonial freedom and endorsed the employment of whatever means were found necessary to attain it. At that Manchester conference the baton also passed from the African diaspora to the mother continent, with figures like Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta emerging amongst its leaders.

Writing in “Inkundla yaBantu” in 1946, Anton Lembede spelled out the thrust of the nationalism he and his colleagues in the ANCYL espoused:

“The Africans are one. Out of the heterogeneous tribes, there must emerge a homogenous nation. The basis of national unity is the nationalistic feeling of the Africans, the feeling of being African irrespective of tribal connection, social status, educational attainment or economic class. “

The ANCYL’s perspective was of the African people realizing their unity in the course of and through the struggle for liberation that would draw in Africans, irrespective of tribe, language or class. From the platform of such unity, they argued, the African majority would overthrow white domination and create a non-racial state in which all citizens enjoyed equal rights. The ANC’s conception of our nation is one made up not solely of the peoples whose origin is Africa, but includes those who came from Europe, those who came from Asia and all those who regard South Africa as their home. Hence the Freedom Charter: “South Africa belongs to all who live in it...”.

The stated objective of the ANC’s strategy of striving for maximum unity among the African majority was in order to realize an inclusive nation. Such a strategy could only be executed by a movement from below and required mass mobilization to be effective.

Historically, the liberals had paternalistically regarded the disenfranchised majority as political minors, some of whom had earned the right to the franchise by educational or other attainments. When it was inaugurated in 1953, the Liberal Party called for a return to Cecil Rhodes’s formula of “the vote for all civilized men”. The Progressive Party, founded by the remnant of Hofmeyr’s supporters in the United Party in 1959, adopted the same policy.

After the 1963 general elections, during which every liberal, other than Helen Suzman lost their Parliamentary seats, the “liberals” advocated various versions of federalism. As they explained it, federalism would accommodate the claims of the competing racial units that make up South Africa. The majority, rightly, saw that as a variant of the apartheid regime’s notion of a multiplicity of competing nations. Its objective too was neutralizing the numerical weight of the African majority.

The capitalist mode of production that took root in South Africa with mining had not evolved organically from feudalism, driven by small entrepreneurs and merchants, as had been the case in Europe. It was imposed by highly developed foreign capitalist interests, allied to local capital. Within ten years of 1870 there were high levels of monopoly concentration, particularly in the mining-finance complex. South African capitalism relied on the pre-capitalist modes of production, with which it articulated in South Africa and its hinterland, to reproduce the proletariat. It harnessed the institutions, laws and mores of a colonial society as its principal instruments for disciplining the proletariat for capital accumulation. South Africa became a country where all the tensions and contradictions associated with capitalist development appeared to be concentrated – a system of undisguised capitalist exploitation, built on colonial domination and sustained by an explicitly racist political order.

National oppression was not an abstraction. It was a complex of institutional instruments employed by a racially exclusive capitalist class to reproduce and discipline to the requirements of capital, a proletariat drawn from a conquered people in a colonial society. The racist political order was the state structure it gave birth to. The national and class aspirations of those whom the system oppressed intersected, interpenetrated, and sometimes converged as a result. Any liberation movement, worthy of the name, had to take account of that reality.

National oppression found expression in a number of social, economic and developmental indicators and resulted in:

- the poverty and underdevelopment for the majority of our people;
- the high levels of the illiteracy and innumeracy;
- to little or no access to clean, potable water;
- resulted in the non-availability of electricity for large numbers of people;
- low food consumption and hunger among thousands;
- invariably low incomes;
- their poor state of health;
- low levels of skills;
- and generally to the unsafe living environment the black communities were compelled to live in.

After 1969, as understood within the ANC and among its supporters, uprooting the system of national oppression entailed addressing precisely the social and economic circumstances that made our people poor and conspired to reproduce their poverty. It required addressing and reversing the material conditions in which the majority of South Africans lived. The content of freedom and democracy therefore extended beyond acquiring the franchise but would have to include the creation of an expanding floor of economic and social rights for the oppressed majority. The necessary changes to bring about such transformation were set out in the Freedom Charter.

At its third clause the Freedom Charter states:

*“The people shall share in the country’s wealth.*

*The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people, the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people; All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter into all trades, crafts and professions.*

The fourth clause says:

*“The land shall be shared amongst those who work it.*

*Restrictions on land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger; The state shall help the peasants with*

*implements, seeds, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers; Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land; All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose; People shall not be robbed of their cattle and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished”.*

The Freedom Charter envisaged the seizure of economic assets in the land, the mines and monopoly industry.

Celebrating the appearance of a section among the black people who now own mills, factories, mines and who have access to productive property as never before, on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the “City Press’s”, editor, Ferial Haffajee, declared: *“We must claim victory, but also admit defeat”*, in a headlined article.

She noted the growth of a stratum of black South Africans who have become quite wealthy since 1994. But, she wrote, that growth has been matched by a yawning wealth gap that has also developed amongst South African blacks. South Africa has become a society with huge inequalities as a result.

Her article was complimented by another, titled *“South Africans on the move”*. This second article maintained that while, on average, it takes four generations for a poor family to attain the middle class income bracket in the United States of America (USA), in South Africa such changes in a family’s life opportunities have unfolded in the timespan of one generation, attesting to the amazing social mobility black families have acquired since the arrival of democracy in 1994.

A pie-chart graph on the same pages depicted *“JSE Black Ownership”*. According to that graph black capitalists now own a sizeable portion of the shares traded on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. These changes, says “City Press”, have all taken place over the previous twenty years.

That South Africa has undergone profound sociological changes since 1994 was also confirmed by the Twenty Year Review of Democracy undertaken by Goldman-Sachs in 2014.

As ANC President, Oliver Tambo, speaking at the Fourth Congress of FRELIMO in 1983 had unequivocally stated:

*“We in the ANC and the revolutionary alliance which we head, have never considered freedom to be the substitution of black for white faces in the corridors of power, while leaving unchanged the exploitative economic infrastructure from which racism receives its sustenance. We have always understood that the uprooting of the oppressive system must necessarily entail the seizure of the key centres of economic power - as stipulated in our Freedom Charter - and their transference to the common ownership of the people. The radical restructuring of the economy will also require dismantling the white minority’s monopoly over the best agricultural land, and its redistribution among those who work it.*

*We envisage a totally new State system in which the army, the police force and the judiciary serve the interests of the people as a whole and not those of an exploitative minority.”*

The reality that the democratic state has not taken the measures visualized in the Freedom Charter is perhaps the “Unfinished Revolution” Adam Habib complained about or the “The Dream Deferred” implied by Thabo Mbeki’s biographer, Mark Gevisser.

The ANC and the broader liberation alliance remains a front of various classes and strata, all adhering to and supporting the Freedom Charter.

Are their different agendas and objectives necessarily contradictory?

Are their class objectives necessarily in conflict?

In anticipation of becoming a government, the ANC had convened a “Ready to Govern” conference in 1993. A team of economists, composed of South Africans working with others drawn from the solidarity movement, was prepared a macro-economic strategy for the democratic government. This was consolidated into a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that served as the ANC’s election platform during the first democratic elections. But the international political environment after the fall of the Berlin Wall was not conducive. State intervention, state control and state ownership of economic assets was demonized and a mood of capitalist triumphalism was afoot. The realities the democratic government confronted also demonstrated that it would not be easy to leverage the resources required to implement the RDP.

The activities, options and choices made by the liberation movement should therefore be weighed as elements of a mutually constitutive framework that recognizes the dynamic nature of the struggle itself. The instability of the environment in which the struggle is waged dictates tactical flexibility and a capacity for adaptation and re-adaptation to changing circumstances. The ANC was compelled to retreat from its ambitious social policy proposals by force of the circumstances under which it took political office in 1994. Many today argue that it is time that those circumstances now be revisited.

The political crisis that compelled the Apartheid regime to explore the path of a negotiated settlement had been generated by a sustained internal state of near insurgency, supplemented by an impressive solidarity movement sometimes likened to the 19<sup>th</sup> century movement against slavery. It was in large measure by the skillful implementation of its 1969 Strategy that the ANC had become the leading force in the struggle for freedom by 1990.

I have previously compared Oliver Tambo’s performance as the President of the ANC to a man repairing a battered old skorokoro while he is obliged to drive it through heavy traffic in a war torn zone! The first challenge was holding the vehicle together! But the rickety old automobile he had taken charge of could only hang together if it was in motion! Because it had been badly battered by its enemies and damaged by its own mistakes, it could not always live up to expectations. Despite all that, he took command of it and successfully drove it to its destination.

I will hazard the guess that history will regard Oliver Tambo's most impressive achievement as the reconstruction of the ANC as an organisation by the painstaking creation of an effective underground inside South Africa. Operation Vulindlela, the successful insertion of a leadership corps that was able operate within South Africa's borders for two years prior to February 1990, was conceived and led by him personally. Later he called on the assistance of Joe Slovo and Alfred Nzo.

By the time Oliver Tambo was brought down by a stroke, on the very eve of the OAU meeting to discuss the initial draft of the Harare Declaration, the ANC was internationally accepted as the movement around which all opponents of the racist regime converged. De Klerk's February 2<sup>nd</sup> speech was an acknowledgement that what his party had attempted to do in April 1960 had failed ignominiously. The architect of that failure was a man who departed South Africa on the very day the NP declared a State of Emergency on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1960.

Returning home in 1990 Oliver Tambo could pride himself in having over fulfilled the mission the ANC had assigned him in March 1960. Not only had he been instrumental in the conception and mobilization of an international solidarity movement, he had also nursed back to health a movement that was rendered leaderless by the Rivonia arrests in July 1963. Having assumed responsibility for it, he led the ANC as President for 24 years and imparted to it leadership a style worthy of emulation. An entire generation of younger men and women learnt the art and virtue of collective leadership sitting at the feet of Oliver Tambo. Oliver Tambo was not feared. He was highly respected! And, he had earned and he retained that respect because of the quality of his leadership. He had the moral courage to recognize and to address the shortcomings, errors and faults of the movement he led. Both the James Stewart and the Jobodwana Commissions, set up to investigate wrong-doing by the ANC's security organs, are unprecedented among liberation movements. Tambo neither attempted to cover-up wrong-doing nor concoct unconvincing alibis for it when it occurred.

Under his leadership the ANC, its members, supporters and well-wishers had built an international anti-apartheid lobby whose influence became irrepressible. The moral authority it acquired was such that the apartheid regime felt compelled to counter it with costly dis-information campaigns that caused scandals and crises within its own ranks – the Muldergate scandal, that ended B. J. Vorster's career. South African business too, led by the Anglo-American Corporation, founded the South African Foundation to sanitise their image and to campaign against sanctions, with extravagant media propaganda drives. Though they continued to shield the apartheid regime, both the Reagan and Thatcher administrations thought it wiser to open a channel of direct communication. Dame Linda Chalker, representing Mrs Thatcher's Tory government, met with Oliver Tambo in 1986; US Secretary of State, George Schultz, also had a formal meeting with Tambo in January 1987

The untimely and still incompletely explained death of Chief Albert Luthuli in 1967 had thrust the awesome responsibility of the ANC Presidency on Oliver Tambo. Because of his near fanatical modesty, Tambo would not accept the title of President until the 1970s. He insisted that until he was formally elected to that office by an ANC conference in South Africa, he would remain Acting President. The same considerations

persuaded the ANC that the national conferences it held outside South Africa were Consultative conferences. For twenty-four years Oliver Reginald Tambo led the ANC, as a result of the influence it acquired under his able leadership, he emerged as the effective leader of South Africa's democratic movement. The critical reference point even his most bitter critics could not ignore.

Addressing mourners at the funeral of Cannon John Collins at St Paul's Cathedral in 1986, Oliver Tambo invoked the New Testament parable of the Good Samaritan. Visiting South Africa during the 1950's, Cannon Collins, unlike the Pharisees of business and commerce, refused to walk on by, leaving the injured traveler who had fallen amongst thieves to his fate. Tambo ended his remarks with a question : Why are our fellow humans even today still being robbed along the Jericho road? The fraternal act of the good Samaritan offers humanity hope; but the real challenge is creating an environment in which the Jericho road is safe for all travelers because it is no longer the haunt of the robbers and thieves who oppress and exploit other humans

Professor Buhlungu,

Members of faculty,

Members of Fort Hare's academic community,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we mark the centenary of Oliver Tambo's birth, we can cast our eyes over the impressive political career of one of its outstanding alumni. Another Fort Hare alumnus, Nelson Mandela, will always be remembered as the founder and first commander of MK. But the man who actually led MK for the greater part of its existence was Oliver Tambo. A brilliant political strategist, he always appreciated that ours would be a long struggle, requiring perseverance as well as audacity. Never reckless, he did not gamble with the lives of the fighters under his command. When the regime demonstrated a willingness to negotiate in earnest, he seized the opportunity in order to spare our country and people further bloodshed.

Oliver Tambo insisted on quality. He insisted on the quality of the movement he led: on the quality of its leadership; on the quality of its pronouncements and on the quality of its actions. In his person he matched that with a dignified bearing and the respect with which he reciprocated the respect he received from others.

Oliver Tambo could be a hard task-master, but he was a leader who led from the front and he placed inordinate demands on himself. It was because he drove himself so hard that his health suffered, leading to that fateful stroke on the eve of one of his diplomatic triumphs. The calibre of the leadership collective he headed may also be judged by the amazing policy continuity after his stroke.

There can be little doubt that what hastened O.R.'s death was the cowardly murder of one of his ablest military commanders, Chris Hani, three weeks previously. Oliver Tambo's name and deeds will live on among that pantheon of liberation heroes and immortals.

The University of Fort Hare can rightly pride itself in having among its alumni such an exceptional leader.

It was a privilege and an honour to have served under him.