

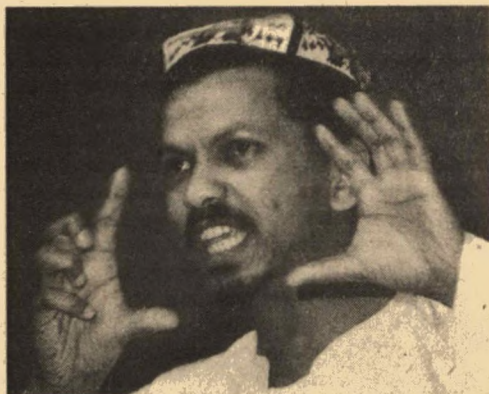
# CANON COLLINS MEMORIAL LECTURE

# THE BASES

# OF OUR

# HOPES

The third annual Canon Collins Memorial Lecture was delivered in London on December 1st 1988, by Maulana Farid Esack. The occasion was under the auspices of the British Defence and Aid Fund, founded by the late Canon John Collins, in the 1950s. We print here a shortened version of the Maulana's speech.



In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Comrade Chairperson, comrades and friends, I regard it as a tremendous honour to deliver the Third Annual Canon Collins Memorial Lecture. To speak in tribute to a person of the stature of Canon Collins and to do so in the footsteps of someone who is regarded as the leader of our nation — Oliver Tambo — is a rare honour, and I am sincerely astounded that the invitation has come to me. Both of them have made an inestimable contribution to the development of our country — and President Tambo continues to do so — and I pray to Allah that I and our people become worthy of their sacrifices.

I have chosen as my theme for tonight's lecture, "the liberation struggle in South Africa: the bases of our hopes." I have done so because certain developments taking place within and outside of South Africa

need to be placed within the context of our ongoing struggle for liberation.

The apartheid regime's denial of the right of the people of South Africa to govern their own lives on the one hand, and the assumption of the right to initiate change on the other is at the heart of the conflict in South Africa today. Repression and reform are two sides of the same bloody coin. There is a link between the world rejoicing at the commutation of the death sentences of the Sharpeville Six and the world's ignorance of the hundreds of others who are still on death row, between the applause at the release of Zeph Motopeng and Harry Gwala on the one hand and the deafening silence at the tragic spectacle of 18-year-old Charles Bester facing six years in gaol for refusing to join an army that is at war with its own people.

## We Cannot Adjust to Apartheid

The world may adjust to maladjustment, but as for us, who never get used to the knock at four in the morning, who never adjust to the loneliness of having to live in a city without one's family because it is against the law for them to be in the cities, who never become accustomed to seeing children in detention, who, after 26 years, have not accepted the fact that a sentence of life imprisonment for Nelson Mandela and others does really mean that — we shall not adjust to the insanity of apartheid. Our

worth and integrity as human beings is directly proportional to the level of our refusal to do so and to our willingness to resist.

This is the first reason why we are part of that struggle to destroy the apartheid system. We are, however, not engaged in some symbolic gesture of hara kiri against an invincible monster — a courageous gesture culminating in the brave death of the candle as it seeks to provide light to a world as divided and unjust as apartheid society. We are resisting because we are winning, and because we are going to win.

Let us look firstly at the political and economic considerations, and then the moral considerations, which lead us to conclude this.

We belong to a tradition of winning. Our struggle has acquired enormous recognition throughout the world, and the days when Sol Plaatje came to London to plead the case for democracy in South Africa, and hardly found any listeners, are past. This recognition has come from the tenacity of our people, and from the various successes that we have scored along the way. Freedom for Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and now Namibia, did not fall out of the sky. They were the results of our people's struggles. Every single act of so-called compassion on the part of the Botha regime, every time they are forced back to the constitutional drawing board, every time an ordinary Londoner asks, "Where do these oranges come from?" before he or she purchases them, has been a victory for our people, and a loss to the regime.

More specifically, there are two major political reasons for our hopes in the dismantling of apartheid and the creation of a non-racial South Africa: the economic cost of apartheid and the organisational strength of resistance to it.

## **The Regime Tries to Save Face**

The war in Angola and the occupation of Namibia are simply too expensive to be continued, and the protracted negotiations around the withdrawal of the Cubans are mere face-saving devices. It costs the South African government more than a million

rand a day to sustain that war, and it has no alternative to withdrawal.

Internally, the price of administering apartheid is becoming astronomical. We have more than 130 cabinet ministers, and something like 17 educational departments. Numerous White high schools are standing empty, and 400 million rand is owed in rent by boycotting Black communities.

The institutions of apartheid have drawn the weaker ones amongst our people, and the price for their participation has been an enormous financial burden on the shoulders of the regime. The coups in the Transkei are an attempt to get their books to balance. The various commissions of enquiry into financial irregularities in the homelands, and the James Commission of Enquiry into various scandals that have rocked the Indian parliament — the House of Delegates — are not just innocent attempts to ensure clean administration; they are desperate measures to call their own supporters to financial order. What they do not understand is that their system and various reform schemes are so devoid of any morality that they can attract only those who have an interest in little other than the linings of their own pockets.

Apartheid is an expensive commodity, and it seems as if the people of South Africa — who never wanted it in the first instance — are determined to make the costs rise even further.

More important than this is the hope that emerges from our own organisations.

## **Bloodied But Unconquered**

I do not want to romanticise our position, or deny that we are bloodied under the state of emergency. Repression in South Africa has taken an enormous toll on our organisations, and we simply haven't recovered from blow after blow dealt out to us. Many of our structures have been smashed, and we have not always succeeded in finding viable and creative alternatives.

At different times, the weakest link in the enemy's defences might occur at different points. It is also important to understand

that history develops unevenly, and in an often contradictory way. In mass struggle, for instance, it is not possible to maintain the same level of intensity for years at a time. Our main task is to ensure that we do not just mark time at the same time in the same place. Each wave of mass struggle must carry us forward. In each period of relative slowing down we must ensure that the gains are not lost, that the lessons of the previous waves are learned.

Yes, we have been bloodied, but that has not prevented us from staging the largest national stayaway ever in South African history. The three days' stayaway in protest against the Labour Relations Amendment Bill and the state of emergency, in May this year, was an unprecedented success. Conditions militated against such a stayaway; it occurred in a period of protracted repression, restrictions placed on COSATU and regulations preventing organisations from calling for a stayaway. In addition, the state threatened harsh action against participants. Despite all of this, COSATU made it happen.

## Elections: A Test of Wills

The South African government made the recent countrywide municipal elections a major test of wills, and they lost that round dismally. Let us look at what they put into it and what they got out of it, and you will understand why we insist that our people are beyond co-option for their own oppression.

■ They announced that 60-70% of Black people registered as voters. Closer examination, however, revealed that rent receipts, housing accommodation waiting lists, pass registration, electricity receipts, and even death certificates, were used to register people. Large numbers of people were registered more than once. Democrats in South Africa have been clamouring for one person one vote, and the government upstages them — it gave us one person ten votes!

■ Prior voting enabled anyone to vote over a period of ten days. The government claims that this was done to prevent intimidation. We say that it was done to deny

the community its right to act as a moral censor.

■ The salaries of the newly elected councillors were increased by 35% — the largest salary increase ever in the public sector.

■ Calling for a boycott of the elections became a crime punishable by R20 000 and/or ten years' imprisonment.

■ *Al Qalam*, the newspaper of progressive Muslims in South Africa, was seized, and so was *Crisis News*, the journal of the Western Province Council of Churches. Both had openly called for a boycott of the polls.

■ They spent 4.7 million rand on a publicity campaign to ensure participation in the elections, and Minister Heunis remarked that at least 80% of the people knew about the elections.

How far did all of this get them?

In many townships, not a single candidate could be found among hundreds of thousands of residents. Out of 52 townships in the Eastern Cape there were elections in only 25. In Motherwell and Cradock there were no candidates. In KwaNobuhle there were only eight candidates for 16 wards. For the remaining 24 councils in the Eastern Cape, there were either no candidates, or only one candidate came forward.

The picture was hardly rosier in other parts of the country. A casual look at Natal and the Witwatersrand areas clearly reflects the hollowness of their victory. According to the Bureau for Information, the total number of eligible voters in the Witwatersrand area totals 2.38 million. They claim that 154 092 votes were cast in this region. Basic arithmetic points to something like 6.5%, which is quite different from the over 20.5% they have claimed. This is, of course, ignoring the fact that the actual population in the area is far beyond the official figures, and that property owners had as many votes as they had properties; 154 092 votes, therefore, does not really mean that so many people actually voted.

Of the 108 possible seats in African townships in Natal, elections were held in only 40 wards. These wards attracted only 7 592 votes.

This is where our people are at.

## Organisational Unity

The impact of the national democratic struggle is being felt all the time, and in ways which strengthen the resolve, unity and organisational ability of our people as nothing has ever done before. Numerous ostensibly neutral organisations have been won over to the struggle in recent years.

Every single church grouping — with the exception of the Afrikaner churches — is under the leadership of people who have, to varying degrees, identified with the liberation struggle. Community-based organisations existing in opposition to state structures have proliferated on an unprecedented scale, and have developed an infra-structural strength hitherto unknown. Similar is the case of professional organisations. Equally significant — though a far greater cause for celebration — is the strength of the movement to resist conscription. They have banned the End Conscription Campaign, but that has not deterred close to 200 young Whites from announcing their refusal to join the South African Defence Force.

In the same manner that we rejoice in the unity of our people and in the growth of democratic structures in our own communities, we rejoice in the doubt and confusion that the ruling class has been plunged into as a result of our struggles. We make no apologies for this, because whatever weakens them tactically is going to lessen their chances of perpetuating minority rule.

They are more fearful than ever before and more dehumanised than ever before. This fear of theirs is giving rise to the emergence of the non-uniformed right-wing vigilantes. Until a few months ago, Barend Strydom, the young White Afrikaner who went on a shooting spree in the streets of Pretoria, was a member of the uniformed right-wing vigilantes — the South African Police. They are in the townships, they are in the factories, they are on the ground, and they have seen the reality of South Africa. They have chosen to get out of their uniforms and fight the battle on their own terrain to complement the battle of those in uniforms. This is the context of the bomb-

ing of Khotso House, the NUSAS office, the office of the Catholic Bishop's Conference; and the kidnapping and killing of activists.

## Killers:

### Uniformed and Non-Uniformed

It is important for us to remember that these people are part of the mainstream of the ruling class. As far as we are concerned there is no difference between the killings Barend Strydom engaged in when he was in uniform a few months ago — and that his uniformed colleagues may still be engaged in — and the ones he engaged in after he got out of that uniform. This also applies to the judicial murders taking place day after day in the Central Prison of Pretoria.

All of this saddens us immensely, because our country is being dragged into a long-drawn-out and bloody war. We must not for a single moment underestimate the determination of the ruling class to survive and to resort to further violence, and — contradictory as it may seem — we may also not overestimate the ability of a people to remain pariahs in the eyes of the international community. There is something elusive that binds us all together — in Islam we refer to this as the Spirit of Allah blown into us at the time of creation — and ultimately, they too must succumb to it.

Meanwhile, we rejoice in the popularity of our struggle. We rejoice in the moral high ground of our struggle, without succumbing to the idea that the moral correctness of our struggle is the only basis of our hopes. We rejoice because our struggle is transforming us now as people and as a nation. We are not going to be victorious some day, or free some day. We are becoming free every day. The meaning that our struggle has supplied our existences with, the joy of working on something together, the pain and trauma of believing in something, and the willingness to lay down one's life for it — all of this has transformed our people.

We rejoice, for the new South Africa is being formed now, in the non-racial and democratic nature of our struggle. Forward to a non-racial, non-sexist, nuclear-free and democratic South Africa!

*Sechaba  
March 89*

# **OUR REVOLUTION IS NOT YET WON, OUR TYRANT STILL OCCUPIES THE THRONE**

**By Mendi Msimang**



Comrade Mendi Msimang, ANC Chief Representative in the United Kingdom and Ireland, delivered this address to the National Summit of the Historic Black Churches in Washington DC on January 10th 1989. ►

African Americans — greetings from the African National Congress! We are truly honoured to be asked to be with you today. Long ago, your ancestors and mine came from the soil of the same continent. And now, here we are, you and I. You are citizens of a great country, with the wars of independence and the emancipation of slavery and the mighty struggle for civil rights behind you. No doubt, you still have a few problems left!

At this historic conference, when you recall the epics of your past, and in this month, when you recall the 60th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King, we count it a great privilege that you should invite us to discuss with you the struggle in Southern Africa. Our revolution is not yet won, our tyrant still occupies the throne, our people have no rights at all.

This is a church conference, and I am a politician, not a preacher. But I am told that a good American sermon has an introduction, three points, and a conclusion.

You have had the introduction. For my three points I shall speak about:

- The nature of our struggle,
- The violence of our struggle,
- The legitimacy of our struggle,

And in conclusion we must consider your response.

It has often been noted that the nature of our struggle is really a matter of faith. Apartheid Pretoria asserts that its policies and practices are to preserve Christian civilisation upon the African continent. We believe such claims are patently false: Christianity has to be liberated from this corrupt caricature that masquerades in its name.

## Fallacious Theology

23.4 of our population adhere to Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian or traditional religion, or specify no religious adherence: they show no sign of being converted to apartheid Christianity.

20.4% belong to African independent churches; 23% to the main line Protestant churches which are members of the South

African Council of Churches (SACC); 9.5% are Catholic; 7.5% belong to smaller Christian groups (Orthodox, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Salvation Army); and all of these specifically reject the claim of the regime that its policies represent Christian truth.

15.9% of the population belong to the Dutch Reformed Churches, but nearly half of these are members of the Black 'daughter churches' which maintain, with the endorsement of the world Reformed Church community, that the moral and theological justification of apartheid is heretical, a direct negation of Christianity.

Thus, the apartheid policies are accepted by only 8.3%, belonging to the White Dutch Reformed Churches.

The ANC totally refutes this imposition of a fallacious theological authority for the oppressive apartheid regime. Religious people are not called to protect the White South African way of life, but to reject it.

When the South African constitution talks of an almighty God who has blessed and protected those who have killed and conquered to enforce a racist supremacy, it is promoting an idol which does not exist. When people thank God that guns have a longer range than spears, that god is a false image. The Kairos Document states:

*"The god of the South African State is not merely an idol or false god, it is the devil disguised as Almighty God — the anti-Christ."*

In the ANC we recognise that many of us were born into a situation of religious antagonism and exclusivity, a type of spiritual apartheid, from which we have been painfully liberating ourselves. South Africa has left behind the missionary era, when many equated Christianity with a form of ecclesiastical colonialism.

No one denies that devout exponents of apartheid may display charitable personal attitudes: tyrants can be charming persons. It is their practice of injustice that is wrong, their promotion of oppressive policies enacted by violence that is evil, and their claim to do it in the name of God that is blasphemous.

Pretoria has constantly attacked the ANC for being ungodly and irreligious, as is seen in P W Botha's letter to Archbishop Tutu of March 16th 1988:

*"You are no doubt aware that the expressed intention of the planned revolution by the ANC/SACP alliance is to ultimately transform South Africa into an atheistic marxist state, where freedom of faith and worship will surely be among the first casualties."*

This is simply rubbish: ridiculous, fallacious sloganism. The ANC is a liberation movement (not a political party) which has always recognised that the liberation struggle takes place in a religious context, and is specifically committed to religious freedom.

When the people formed the African National Congress in Bloemfontein in 1912, South Africa was a predominantly Christian country and their commitment to a united quest for a liberated society was fired by their faith.

From Rev John Dube, the first President, who opened the ANC in prayer, to S M Makgatho, Rev Z R Mahabane, Rev W B Rubusane, J T Gumede ... right down to Chief Albert Lutuli, Oliver Tambo, and Nelson Mandela today, our leadership has been strengthened by religious conviction. O R Tambo said in May 1987:

*"Our founders were church men and women. Throughout our 75 years that link has never been broken."*

Today, the ANC embraces within its membership a wide variety of believers. The varying symbols and practices through which we focus our faith bring to our culture a wealth of values which enrich us all, and display a unanimity of theological, ethical and political priorities which confirm and guide our struggle to a liberated South Africa.

From the beliefs and experiences within its own ranks, the ANC knows that adherents of all faiths have contributions to make to the concept of justice and peace, and the practice of democracy, from which caring and competent communities are emerging to comprise our new society. O R Tambo said:

*Ours is a national liberation movement which contains within it different philosophical and religious tendencies, but all of which adhere to a common resolve to bring about a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa on the basis of the Freedom Charter ... As in the past, we shall resist all attempts to inject any anti-religious notions into our midst."*

The Freedom Charter, devised and accepted in 1955 after a nation-wide consultation, is the main focus of ANC policy. It declares that:

*"The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children.*

*All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief, shall be repealed.*

*Only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright, without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief."*

This commitment to religious pluralism in the Freedom Charter has two aspects. It is a political statement that democracy preserves religious freedom, and a theological statement that religious pluralism is essential for democracy.

When he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Oslo in 1961, Chief Lutuli said in his lecture:

*"I also, as a Christian and patriot, could not look on while systematic attempts were made in almost every department of life to debase the God-factor in man, or to set a limit beyond which the human being in his Black form might not strive to serve his creator to the best of his ability. To remain neutral in a situation where the laws of the land virtually criticised God for having created men of colour was the sort of thing I, as a Christian, could not tolerate."*

I quote Shaikh Abdul Hamid Gabier:

*"The Freedom Charter, to which the ANC is committed, provides the surest guarantee of the preservation of our Din and culture in a liberated South Africa."*

And I quote from Professor Lourens Du Plessis, speaking in Dakar in 1987:



Religious leaders kneel to pray during a march in Cape Town, February 1988

*"The Freedom Charter still remains the basis of the ANC programme. It gives me hope. On the basis of this remarkable expression of the aspirations of the people of South Africa ... the ANC perception of the struggle provides room for me and other Afrikaners who despise apartheid to also make a particular contribution."*

The faith which underlies the Freedom Charter supersedes the false claims of religious apartheid, and the Charter ends with a declaration to struggle together until liberation is wrought: for faith grows in action:

*"These freedoms we will fight for side by side throughout our lives until we have won our liberty."*

The Maulana Farid Esack said in Cape Town in August 1984:

*"They did not ask us if we were Muslim or Christian when they declared Constantia White. They did not ask us if we were Hindus or Muslims when they tear-gassed us; nor do they enquire about our religion when they kill our children on the streets. Side by side apartheid has sought to dehumanise us, and side by side we shall work to destroy it and create a new South Africa."*

Our struggle is a matter of faith; our faith is confirmed in our struggle.

## The Violence of Our Struggle

Violence rules Southern Africa. It is a function of government by coercion instead of government by consent, and the system is bound by it. It cannot establish the apartheid policy except by violence. It cannot counter the liberation struggle and the Freedom Charter except by violence. It cannot answer the moral appeal of non-violent resistance except by violence. It cannot prevent justice being done except by violence.

Millions have suffered under racist rule from structural, social, judicial or military violence. Infant mortality, preventable disease, starvation, poverty, deliberate homelessness, industrial and agricultural neglect, detention, imprisonment and the calculated killing of thousands throughout the subcontinent verges on genocide. The blood lies warm across Africa today because apartheid is a killing culture.

The liberation struggle is not an academic debate in gracious surroundings, but gas and guns and bloody guts, dogs' teeth in your children's legs and electrodes on their testicles. Apartheid is violence unto death in the name of Jesus Christ.

And it goes on. Do not be misled by the talk of reform: repression is as strong as ever today. The South African Catholic



Bishops' meeting with the ANC in Lusaka recognised that apartheid cannot be reformed, but must be ended in its entirety.

Talk of releasing Mandela from prison conceals the hundreds now being consigned to prison. The Sharpeville Six were saved from the gallows because of the threat of sanctions, but the judgment in the Delmas trial makes any quest for peaceful political change into treason. "If these four men have committed treason," says Archbishop Tutu, "then I have committed treason as well." Pik Botha shook hands with Chester Crocker in Brazzaville on the day his colleagues were banning four more organisations at home. The brutality never stops.

Those who denounce the ANC for 'practising violence' or being 'a terrorist organisation' forget that for nearly 80 years our struggle has used non-violent direct action against the apartheid regime. It did not stop when the Passive Resistance Campaigns were crushed after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, but continues today at a higher level than ever. Boycotts of schools, shops and buses abound. Last month the regime's Soweto City Council wrote off R167 million lost by the rent boycotts; despite fearsome repression, 1988 saw the greatest three-day national strike in South African history; sit-ins and stayaways continue; bans on peaceful funerals, meetings and marches are defied; there is persistent non-co-operation with officials appointed by the regime, rejection of the South African Defence Force and the South African Police, and continuous defiance of the Special Branch and its tactics of intimidation and destruction. Church leaders, gaoled whilst marching in peace to protest to the State President, are committed to making non-violent action work.

## Injustice Breeds Violence

The ANC has deep sympathy with those who find the use of force difficult; it causes us much anguish too. The addition of the strategy of armed struggle to liberation tactics came after 46 years of non-violent endeavours. All peaceful means had been exhausted, the appeal for a National Con-

vention rejected, and the existence of the ANC as a passive resistance organisation summarily banned, before military methods were used.

When the ANC speaks of turning to armed struggle as a last resort, it means we have tried every sort of non-violent resistance and found it blocked by violence. The pursuit of peace means that warmongers who cannot be won by conversion must be restrained by compulsion. (Many of those who criticise the ANC for taking up arms have not tried anything.)

After World War II, Christians in many colonial countries found that, because violence was a structural function of oppressive societies, the removal of such regimes was the only way to secure justice and peace. Political and economic systems which established the rich and exploited the poor had to be changed to remove both the injustice and the violence which ensured it, and this was brutally apparent in South Africa, which defined and defended oppression on racist grounds.

Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and agnostics in the ANC were in the forefront of those who debated this question, and when the ANC was banned in 1960 they could no longer escape a decision. Nelson Mandela told the court in 1963:

*"At the beginning of June 1961, after a long and anxious assessment of the South African situation, I, and some of my colleagues, came to the conclusion that, as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be unrealistic and wrong for African leaders to continue preaching peace and non-violence when the government had met our peaceful demands with force. This conclusion was not easily arrived at. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle, and to form Umkhonto We Sizwe. We did so, not because we desired such a course, but solely because the government had left us with no other choice."*

Criminals and fascists and tyrants have to be restrained, and when persuasion fails to reform them force is necessary to remove them. Oppressors who exterminated those who sought justice and peace had to be

removed from power, and, like the struggle to remove the Nazis, this necessitated the use of arms.

The bland statement that "the Church does not agree with violence," requires closer examination.

The ANC has great respect for those who hold deeply 'pacifist' beliefs yet commit themselves to the liberation struggle by taking non-violent action against the regime. But those who use an appeal to pacifism to cloak their racism, imperialism or cowardice, or use their rejection of armed struggle as an excuse to avoid the struggle altogether, are supporting the regime. In the judgment of Mahatma Gandhi, if cowardice is the only alternative to violence, it is better to choose violence.

*"I would rather have blood on my hands than the water of Pontius Pilate,"*

said Archbishop Trevor Huddleston.

History reveals several traditions about violence. I quote Herbert McCabe, OP:

*"There is probably no sound on earth so bizarre as the noise of clergymen bleating about terrorism and revolutionary violence whilst their cathedrals are stuffed with regimental flags and monuments to colonial wars. The Christian Church, with minor exceptions, has been solidly on the side of violence for centuries, but normally it has been the violence of soldiers and policemen. It is only when the poor catch on to violence that it suddenly turns out to be against the gospel."*

But there is another tradition, which has accepted the use of armed struggle for righteousness' sake. Those who protect the poor and oppressed, stand up against tyranny, fight to preserve justice and seek peace, have been praised. The ANC hates violence, but is proud that thousands of men and women and boys and girls are willing to give their lives to defend our people against aggression.

There is a fundamental difference between force and violence, and the words should be used correctly. Force is used by legitimate rulers to restrain wickedness and vice and protect their citizens, and is quite acceptable. Violence describes the aggressive acts of illegitimate oppressors and criminals, and is repulsive.

## Defence of Justice

Most churches accept that force is sometimes necessary to defend justice and withstand the violence of oppressors; so does the ANC. The Church advocates non-military force; the ANC has practised it for decades. Side by side with such strategies, the Church supports the use of military action where necessary; so does the ANC.

Neither the South African regime nor Western governments have moral or theological objections to the use of force; they enrol thousands of people to the 'Defence Force' every year. The issue is not the use of force, but the legitimacy of the user; not their militancy, but their morality.

The National Executive Committee of the ANC is extremely concerned at the recent spate of attacks on civilian targets. While the great majority of these have been mounted by the regime, on August 17th 1988, the NEC noted that:

*"Some of these attacks have been carried out by cadres of the people's army, Umkhonto We Sizwe ... and in certain instances operational circumstances resulted in unintended casualties. It has also come to their notice that agents of the Pretoria regime have been detailed to carry out a number of bomb attacks deliberately, to sow confusion among the people of South Africa and the international community, and to discredit the African National Congress. The ANC hereby underscores that it is contrary to our policy to select targets whose sole objective is to strike at civilians."*

In an interview with the Afrikaans newspaper, *Beeld*, in December 1988, Margaret Thatcher spoke of the ANC and said:

*"The question is how to get it to give up the politics of violence. The best approach is by offering the possibility of negotiations."*

The ANC has always sought to talk rather than fight, and the regime has always responded with violence. When Lutuli and Mandela sought a round table conference in the 1950s, when Sharpeville residents sought to talk to the Bantu Education

authorities in the 1970s, and when the mourners of Uitenhage and the clergy in Cape Town sought to talk in the mid-eighties, the response was brutal — armed rejection. Thousands are dead today because they sought to talk to the racist regime.

No one has died by seeking to talk with the ANC. Students, politicians, businessmen, Pope and archbishops, women and men, Black and White, Afrikaner and English, Sotho and Zulu, rich and poor, the world's leaders and oppressed children ... they all talk to the ANC. What is this politics of violence we must give up before they will talk to us?

## **The Legitimacy of Our Struggle**

The South African regime contends that it alone may make decisions for our country. All must obey without question, because government is instituted of God to be the authority in matters of state. Minister J G Heunis wrote to the church leaders of Thaba'Nchu, who requested reconsideration of a compulsory removal:

*"I have no doubt that you, being men of the cloth, will not object to the Government expressing its view on non-governmental institutions meddling in affairs of state. I earnestly and with reverence must request the signatories not to become involved in the matter ... which is a decision of the highest government authority in the country, but rather to confine themselves to the matter for which they have been called, namely service to the Lord."*

There is international unanimity that people have the right to determine their own governments and their own future, which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and because apartheid violates this it constitutes a crime against humanity:

*"All people have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."*

In 1971, the International Court of Justice declared:

*"To establish ... and to enforce distinctions, exclusions, restrictions and limitations exclusively based on grounds of race, colour descent, or national or ethnic origin, which constitute a basic denial of fundamental human rights, is a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter."*

By its violent subjugation of its own citizens, the South African regime violates international law and would be subject to international exclusions and sanctions were it not for the protection of the United Kingdom or United States veto on the Security Council. The Declaration of Human Rights reads:

*"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and general elections."*

The only legitimate basis for the authority of any government is the consent of the people, and thus the regime has no right in international law to speak in the name of South Africa and no right to assure its own survival. This judgement is endorsed by the World Council of Churches and the South African Council of Churches. The statement made by the WCC in Lusaka in 1987 reads:

*"It is our belief that civil authority is instituted of God to do good, and that under the biblical imperative all people are obliged to do justice and show special care for the oppressed and the poor. It is this understanding that leaves us with no alternative but to conclude that the South African regime and its colonial domination of Namibia is illegitimate."*

*We affirm the unquestionable right of the people of Namibia and South Africa to secure justice and peace through the liberation movements. While remaining committed to peaceful change, we recognise that the nature of the South African regime which wages war against its own inhabitants and neighbours compels the movements to the use of force along with other means to end oppression. We call upon the Churches in the international community to seek ways to give this affirmation practical effect in the struggle for liberation in the region and to strengthen*

*their contacts with the liberation movements."*

The words of South African church leaders to their own White members, given in an SACC statement in February 1988, should be heeded by the whole Western world:

*"To the White voters of South Africa we must say that you are being deceived by the government. Your fellow South Africans want nothing more than to live in a just and peaceful country. Your position is becoming untenable and we believe you must dissociate yourselves from this government. Apartheid is a heresy. You cannot reform a heresy. If you are to assure your future you must pull out of 'White politics' and join the real struggle for democracy."*

Another question on the legitimacy of our struggle, which is frequently raised in the West, concerns our relations with the South African Communist Party and the socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union. It can be answered directly by our President, Oliver Tambo:

*"We must state clearly that we consider all these forces as firm and reliable allies in the common struggle for the liberation of our country and our people. Instead of being criticised and denounced for involving themselves in the struggle against apartheid, they should rather be congratulated as should people of other political persuasions, such as social democrats and liberals who have also joined the fight against White majority domination ...*

*The ANC ... is not in the least interested that elements of the East-West conflict should be introduced into our situation. It would therefore help a great deal if the same spirit that inspired both East and West in the struggle against Hitler Germany should once more prevail, enabling the great powers to act in concert, with the common objective of seeing South Africa transformed into a non-racial, non-aligned and peaceful entity."*

No one can validate apartheid by criticising communism. Our problems in South Africa are not caused by commissars who claim to be atheists, but by capitalists who claim to believe in God. The challenge is not how

to evangelise Eastern Communists, but how to liberate Western Christians.

Those who afford the South African regime recognition and claim they are 'seeking positive change' must realise this is not the way to deal with international criminals. Humanity does not ask those condemned for committing mass murder and wholesale robbery to be a little kinder; it deposes them and appoints legitimate rulers instead.

In February 1988, Dr Alan Boesak said:

*"Let us no longer pussyfoot around this issue. This is an illegitimate government that deserves no authority and does not have it ... that deserves no obedience and must not get it."*

In conclusion, you did not ask the ANC to come here to tell you that apartheid is wrong: we won that battle years ago. You want to know how you can help to pull the tyrant from the throne, how you can stand in solidarity and support with these people who seek to build a new society on the other side of earth.

## **Expose False Theology**

You will not expect me to ask you to take the matter lightly. You are too nurtured in the words of Scripture, and too reminiscent of your own struggles, to imagine that 'taking up your cross' is an undemanding matter, or that 'laying down your life for your friends' will not hurt. We share together in the struggle of all God's people on earth for their inheritance.

North America is largely Christian, and the fallacies and heresies which infect the religious perceptions of many South Africans affect you too. Because apartheid is theologically false its removal is a duty upon Christian people everywhere.

The US church, the US people, and the US government, must be brought to realise that apartheid cannot be reformed but must be removed and replaced. The right-wing sects which seek to justify right-wing policies, the evil arguments which excuse racist genocide, and the heretical voices which worship the idols of anti-communism and the apostasy of affluence, must be confronted and silenced.

We need you to make it clear to every US citizen that the liberation struggle is theologically sound; that the quest for a new united nation, with a mandate to establish a free, non-racial non-sexist democratic society, can be embraced wholeheartedly by the people of faith. Let the climate of conviction become so strong that no one can claim to belong to Christ in the US without supporting the liberation struggle in South Africa! Who will take on that theological task for us?

## Support Sanctions

Secondly, the tyranny of Pretoria cannot continue to exist without the support of the Western world, and the imposition of total mandatory sanctions in every sphere is the crucial political objective. Some of you have made magnificent efforts over the years to promote this policy, but we need to confirm that call. Sanctions are working.

Sanctions are designed to hit full pockets, and hit them first, and they do. Those who are squealing about sanctions are Whites, not Blacks; the wealthy, not the impoverished; those with work, not those without work. Sanctions are designed to make those who consort with the apartheid regime to tremble, and as the democratic movement grows those who are not aligned with that movement fear sanctions more and more.

The arms embargo was a vital factor in the military defeat of the South African forces in Angola. Sporting and cultural boycotts have been major elements in undermining White South Africa's ability to live with itself. Financial sanctions are proving a crucial influence in making apartheid too expensive to sustain. That is politics.

But if the political will of America is to be aroused by her politicians, it will be because the conscience of America has been aroused by her people. Who will take on that political task for us?

## Financing The Struggle

Thirdly, there is the task of financing the liberation struggle. Despite divestment, US

business is making millions through the exploitation of the human and natural resources of our country. Despite the public protestations of peaceful intent, US dollars feed the political and military disturbances which plague our subcontinent.

Is it not time for you to come in on our side, by direct financial support for the work of the African National Congress? We do not ask you for equipment to assault the military might of the racist regime; we believe that is the work of God; but it is not the role of churches.

Most of our work falls in direct response to the word of the Prophet Isaiah which Jesus of Nazareth took to himself:

*"... to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, and announce that the day has come when the Lord will save his people."*

To the African National Congress this vision means not only evangelical zeal, but conscientising the world to win commitment to the political objectives of liberation; it means structuring and directing the quest for a new community; it means ministering to thousands of exiles with the essentials of healthy living and an education in which struggle can emerge in true democracy; it means our schools and hospitals and settlements; it means research and training to prepare to constitute a democratic South Africa; it means enabling our people to turn the hopes of the Freedom Charter into the experience of liberated living. And that means money.

This is what we need from you, Christian comrades: theological partnership, political collegiality, and financial solidarity.

We have always had support from Christian individuals within our ranks, but it is only in recent times that church bodies such as you have begun to reach out their hands to us. African Americans, you will understand the particular poignancy, the deep sense of gratitude and greeting, which enables me today to reach out my hands to you in the name of, and on behalf of, my leadership and the entire membership of the African National Congress and the oppressed and fighting people of South Africa.

# ANC INTERNATIONAL

## ANC Mission in USSR

Soviet solidarity with our liberation struggle was given further expression when the ANC mission in the Soviet Union was formally opened on January 6th. Comrade Simon Makana is the Chief Representative.

The opening was marked by a public meeting at the premises of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in Moscow. Comrade Gleb Starushenko, deputy head of the Africa Institute, was in the chair, and the main address was given by Comrade Dan Tloome, chairman of the South African Communist Party and senior member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC. The main address on behalf of the Soviet

Union was given by Comrade Mikhail Pavlovich Vishinsky, the Deputy Minister of Justice.

The Soviet Union has shown its friendship and its support for our struggle by granting the ANC full diplomatic status, and so the meeting was attended by ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps stationed in Moscow.

In the evening, there was a reception in the 'Prague' restaurant in Moscow. The hall was filled to capacity with diplomats and representatives from all walks of life in the Soviet Union. It was a powerful demonstration of support for the ANC and the people of South Africa in their struggle for national and social emancipation.



*The platform at the opening of the ANC mission in Moscow. From left to right: Comrade Vishinsky, Comrade Simon Makana, Comrade Dan Tloome, Professor Starushenko, The Archimandrite Ashurkov Feofan, and Comrade Dmitri Zavgorodny, African Secretary of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee*

# MOTHER COURAGE

**W**HAT made Molly Blackburn a phenomenon? Compared to many others she merely dabbled in South Africa's murky political lake. She did not have the intellect of a Slabbert, the stature of a Tutu, the symbolism of a Mandela, the long service of a Botha.

As MPC for Walmer her influence on the tides and currents was miniscule. She did not order or direct events. There have been many whose anger was as deep and whose fight was equally uncompromising.

Yet in East Cape townships graffiti can still be seen: "Viva Molly . . . Viva Comrade Molly . . . We salute you Molly Blackburn. Amanda."

At a time when few whites dared run the gauntlet of stones and township fury, she stood with friends among the 70 000 crowd at the funeral for the victims of the Langa shootings.

Recognised and invited to the podium, the vast crowd stood and roared "Viva, Molly". Thousands saw in her a warrior for justice.

Yet four years before that she was an ordinary housewife, a partner in a successful estate agency, concerned about the fate of her country but perhaps no more so than a thousand others. The daughter of a successful PE lawyer, she had imbibed the starched tradition and sanctimony of the Collegiate School for Girls.

Thereafter she completed a BA at Rhodes, majoring in psychology and geography, concluded an early marriage and produced three children while living in Europe. The marriage failed. Back in South Africa, she married again and brought up four more children.

There was steel at her core (and her sister Judy Chalmers, remembers her as always knowing precisely what she wanted), but there is little in her background to suggest she was to become a warrior for justice.

"I really cannot think of a more conservative person or anyone

*Please Turn Over.*



**Molly Blackburn was an anonymous Port Elizabeth estate agent only four years before her death in a car crash. In the 13 months since then, her story has taken on the proportions of legend — now Jane Fonda wants the Blackburn role in a planned American television series about South Africa. Here, Bill Krige outlines the role the real Molly played in a human drama that involves us all.**

with less ambition to be controversial," she once remarked, harking back (wistfully perhaps), to the comfort of an upbringing which was conventional and conservative, exceptional perhaps only in the degree of its privilege.

Molly's active political career began in 1981 with her election as MPC for Walmer, an upper middle class PE constituency which had previously flirted with both National and United Party representatives.

Although peripheral to the mainstream of politics, the post involved her more deeply in work she had become familiar with through her ties with the Black Sash.

Calls for help began to stream to her home from different parts of the East Cape; people in difficulty, people stamped on by authority, victims of pass laws, people without homes or people with homes but faced with evictions; the downtrodden, the bullied, disadvantaged and oppressed.

She attended to each with dedication and care. It did more than absorb her time. It brought out and honed the qualities for which she is now best remembered — moral toughness, raw courage, an indomitable will and a flair for showmanship. These attributes helped keep her going in the face of impossible odds.

So did anger.

### **All tragic scars**

"The hurt and pain of the system enraged her," says Judy Chalmers. "I think she came close to despair quite often but she refused to give up."

There are half a dozen beacons in her career, all of them tragic scars on the nation's landscape.

The first lasted longest, her fight for the victims of influx control, but perhaps the most poignant beacon was her friendship with a black PE schoolboy, Sipiwo Mthimkulu, mysteriously poisoned, apparently while in police detention. He later disappeared and hasn't been seen since.

Molly also befriended and adopted as her own the cause of the black residents of Cradock, represented by four men who were later murdered and whose killers have never been traced.

A fourth beacon came a few days before the Langa tragedy when she and some Black Sash colleagues entered the Uitenhage charge office and found a youth being assaulted by two policemen.

Then came the Maduna Road shootings, and in the aftermath she was catapulted into the international limelight. Finally, there were a series of court cases as the authorities sought to restrict her movements and influence.

By the time Molly went to Cape Town for her first session of the provincial council, the failure of influx control had long been apparent but the law was still being enforced with an almost brutal hopelessness.

The vast Cape Flats squatter settlements endured a numbing cycle of raids,

**The hurt and pain of the system enraged her. She came close to despair but refused to give up.**



mass arrests, the destruction of flimsy shelters, fines, jail and deportation. It failed utterly to sweep back the incoming tide of people desperate for work or to live family lives, and the cruelty made an indelible impression on the new MPC.

Of the mass arrests and destruction at No Name Camp in August, 1981 she wrote: "I knew that whatever happened to me politically or whatever happened in my daily life, things for me would never be quite the same again."

Three weeks after the event, the Black Sash was still trying to trace 93 children separated from their parents.

It wasn't a turning point but it hardened her resolve. She made political enemies. One MPC referred to her contemptuously as "The Honourable Member for New Brighton". It was in that forum, frustrated and angered by the official interest, that she held up the bloodstained T-shirt of a six-year-old child wounded by birdshot.

"On the front of this T-shirt there is a picture of Paddington bear and it says: 'Please take care of this bear'. On the back there are bloodstains and holes."

Everyone listened. But the shock tactics were resented.

### **Supposedly contrived**

"I really cannot blame sane, rational people for thinking accounts of violence against blacks as being far-fetched," she was later to say. "They think them contrived stories to discredit the authorities, and so would you — unless you had seen them with your own eyes."

It was to get people to see with their own eyes that she held aloft the bloodstained T-shirt. In Port Elizabeth a year later she brought to a Press conference called by the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Louis le Grange, the mother of a youth shot dead by the police in the townships. Confronted, he ordered an inquiry. The policemen were later convicted and jailed.

Her flair for drama was employed sparingly. Mostly she worked in the background, visiting drab police stations and magistrate's courts trying to find people

missing from the last devastating raid, talking to committees in small towns who were upset by rental rises, or who felt the need for a clinic or a new road.

At home the obscene phone calls, death threats and poison letters flooded in. The ambulance department's emergency cardiac unit was called to her home. A brick flung through the window of the Black Sash office had her name painted on it. "Good for a doorstep," she said.

In 1981, Sipiwo Mthimkulu, an executive member of the Congress of South African Students, was involved in an anti-Republic day protest. He was arrested. It was the last his family saw of him until he was freed from detention on October 20.

Five days later he was admitted to hospital in Port Elizabeth. His hair came out in clumps and he suffered severe pains in the feet, legs and stomach.

His mother reported that his mind was sometimes confused and that he had lost his appetite.

Transferred to Groote Schuur, it was discovered that he was suffering from thallium poisoning. Thallium is a tasteless and odourless substance. Its use is restricted and its effects cumulative; the victim beginning to show signs only a week after ingestion.

### **Symptoms of poisoning**

According to Professor Frances Ames, head of the Department of Neurology at the University of Cape Town, Sipiwo first showed symptoms of thallium poisoning before he was released from detention.

Molly Blackburn and Di Bishop took up his case.

After a long period of recovery, Sipiwo flew back to Port Elizabeth, still confined to a wheelchair. He sued the Minister of Law and Order for R40 000 for alleged assault, electric shocks and lengthy periods of forced standing.

"At this time Molly got to know Sipiwo very well. He came to mean a great deal to her," says Judy Chalmers. "They used to sit and chat for hours. She found him a wonderfully intelligent and constructive person."

Sipiwo needed equipment to help him regain the use of his legs and someone answered an appeal made by Molly Blackburn and donated an exercise bicycle.

His father said: "This is a wonderful gesture, more especially when one thinks that races other than my own have responded to our appeal."

It was one of the last pleasantries in the unfolding tragedy.

A few weeks later, he instituted a claim of R150 000 against the Minister of Law and Order for alleged poisoning while in detention. Ten days later the schoolboy, who could only walk with the aid of a stick, phoned Molly Blackburn four times, apparently to ask for a lift back home from his therapy session at Livingstone Hospital. Molly Blackburn was out, and Sipiwo Mthimkulu was never seen again.

"She took it terribly hard," says Judy



Chalmers. "It was the closest I have ever seen her to despair."

Occasionally it bubbled out into print as in an anguished letter to Eastern Province Herald two weeks after the anniversary of his disappearance, which illustrated the enormity of the problems confronting the people she tried to help.

"Sometimes I feel bowled over," she wrote. "Don't you understand . . . I'm just a housewife, just a mother, just a public representative with very little power . . . maybe quite a lot of feeling . . . but actually very short of clout."

One supplicant was the father of a boy of 13 arrested and convicted for throwing stones at a street light. He was transferred 200 kilometres to a Place of Safety and then disappeared.

The father was desperate. Another visitor was a science graduate, a lecturer at a motor firm, who needed help getting the magical Section 10 rights of a permanent resident so that he could bring his wife and six-year-old daughter to live with him.

He lived in the bachelor quarters at PE's Kwazakele township.

### **Shattering picture**

"Something shuts down in my mind," she wrote, "the shattering picture of the undiluted squalor of the ablution blocks, the desperate attempts at privacy by men of all ages shoved into a dormitory-like existence, the single, bare light bulb, grey walls, cement floors . . . this is the ghetto to beat all ghettos."

By this time, Molly Blackburn was deeply involved with the work of the Cradock Ratepayers Association (Cradora) whose investigation into rents and service charges in Ilingelihle township had, in her words to the provincial council, escalated into a nightmare of detentions, assaults and intimidation by the authorities.

Cradora's chairman was Matthew Goniwe, acting principal of the Sam Xhali school and, by all accounts, a remarkable person adored by his pupils. The response to his queries about why rentals were so high, was blunt. He was transferred to Graaff Reinet.

He refused to go and was fired. This sparked a school boycott in Cradock which was to last 15 months. Goniwe was detained, transferred to Cape Town and held in solitary confinement for several months in terms of the Internal Security Act.

Sometime after his release, Molly Blackburn and Di Bishop dropped him off at home — and were arrested for being in Ilingelihle without a permit. Found guilty and cautioned, she learnt that a ministerial edict had been issued banning her from entering the township. A similar tactic was later employed in PE.

By this time, mid-December 1984, the unrest, which had been seething prior to the referendum on the new constitution, had erupted.

She attended a meeting of the PE Black Civic Association and heard an ex-Robben

**The community knows. Hers was not a gift of money or of food or of finance, but of herself.**



Island prisoner, Mr Ernest Malgas, say that people were not violent but he feared a stage would be reached when they could no longer fold their arms and sit down.

"We should not dwell on the hatreds and sufferings of the past but should put all our energies into looking into and working towards the future," Molly Blackburn told the gathering.

"The time is past when whites can think that the events of the townships do not concern them — whether it be the toilets in Red Location, whether it be the school boycotts of the unequal education opportunities, whether it be influx control or the so-called residential rights.

"December 16 (the Day of the Vow) should be a day when we cry out: 'Enough. No more. We and our children demand that a non-racial, democratic government be set up'."

### **Deepening alienation**

Events in the East Cape were slipping from control. As her concern deepened so did Molly's alienation from the authorities.

A few days before the Langa shootings on March 21, 1985, several black Sash members, including Molly Blackburn, entered the Uitenhage charge office and found two policemen assaulting a youth shackled to a table. They were later tried and convicted.

Molly and Dr Elizabeth Thompson were charged with *crimen injuria* for alleging they had smelt liquor on the breath of the officer in charge.

It was a difficult period. At mass funerals for victims of the unrest, Molly Blackburn was often seen, sometimes invited into the stands but otherwise among the crowds, sitting on the grass, straight-backed, jut-jawed, her presence at highly charged and sometimes violent gatherings, tense with the presence of armed police in Casspirs, a statement of solidarity.

Three leaders of Pebco, the organisation she had addressed so recently, disappeared. No trace of them has ever been found. And then at the end of June last year, four leaders of Cradora, including Matthew Goniwe, disappeared. Their

bodies, stabbed and burnt, were discovered a few days apart. A reward of R50 000 for the conviction of their killers is unclaimed.

"Events in the East Cape, when consolidated, read like a cheap horror story," Molly Blackburn told a crowd of 3 000 in Johannesburg. She had become part of that story. In her last months she gave evidence before the Kannemeyer Commission of Inquiry into the Langa shootings, was charged with attending an illegal gathering in PE, arrested with a US Appeal Court judge for being in Fort Beaufort's township without a permit and defended herself against a charge of *crimen injuria*. One by one, the cases against her collapsed.

On December 3 the two Uitenhage policemen were found guilty. The magistrate said he had treated Molly Blackburn's evidence with great caution "because of her alleged bias against the police" but had "found her a good witness. She stayed calm when subjected to a thorough cross-examination. Any basic untruths in her evidence would have been exposed by this kind of cross examination".

### **Immense problems**

"I have no problems with the uniformed police who are unfailingly helpful and courteous," she once said. "I have immense problems with the non-uniformed police. What is so ominous is their apparent lack of accountability."

Three weeks later she died in a head-on car accident.

Mrs Nonyameko Goniwe, widowed by the murder of the husband only a few months earlier, said: "We always ran to her when we had a problem. She was ever willing to help and never said no. She was loved by the whole community and the people of Ilingelihle are moved by her death."

It is now a year later and the townships have largely disappeared from view, with the media operating under severe curbs while thousands are held without trial under the provisions of the state of emergency.

They have become taglines in the daily unrest report issued by the Bureau for Information, places where stones are thrown, where vehicles and sometimes people are burnt.

Will the memory of Molly Blackburn survive the trauma? Perhaps not. But it is the conviction of Mrs Joyce Mthimkulu, mother of a schoolboy who never came home, that she will not be forgotten.

"I have no words to describe her, not even to myself. But the community knows. Hers was not a gift of money or of food or of finance but of herself. She could give you advice, good advice, and contact anybody about what it was that concerned you. It was for you to take that advice or leave it. She was free with everybody. Siphiso was free with her and she with him. She loved that boy. And to me she was wonderful." □

# The man, the woman and the legend



*UNTIL recently Winnie Mandela was honoured in anti-apartheid circles with the title, 'Mother of the Nation'. Allegations of torture and murder against her personal bodyguard, the Mandela Football Club, have led to organisations like the UDF and Cosatu publicly distancing themselves from her. In the light of the recent publication of a biography on Nelson Mandela, the British writer R W JOHNSON, investigates different aspects of the remarkable Mandela family. In an accompanying article on page 43, CHRISTOF HEYNS looks at Nelson Mandela and the question of martyrdom.*

NELSON MANDELA, incarcerated for over a quarter of a century, writes frequently to his wife, Winnie, about his vivid and often rather frightening dreams.

"I dreamt I was with the young men of the kraal. They gave me herbs to strengthen me against you. They were saying that I should fight with you so that you would run away. And you were shouting at me to throw away those leaves, they were bad medicine. A whole audience was listening to this conversation. I threw the leaves away.

"On the night of 21/9 you and I were driving the Olds at corner of Eloff and Market when you rushed out and spewed out porridge. It was hard and old with a crust on top. Your whole body quivered as each lump came out and you complained of a sharp pain on your right shoulder. I held you light against my body, unmindful of the curious crowd and the traffic jam.

"All the wonderful thrills I have missed. A lady sat on the floor with her legs stretched out as our mothers used to relax

in the old days. Though I can't remember the actual words, she sang with a golden voice, the face radiating all the affection and fire a woman can give a man. She turned and twisted her arms. That lady was none other than our darling Mum."

"I don't know how to interpret these dreams," Mandela writes. "But at least they indicate that there is far less steel in me than I had thought, that distance and two decades of separation have not strengthened the steel in me."

There is a terrible sadness to many of his letters. "I've plans, wishes and hopes," he writes at a point. "I dream and build castles. But one has to be realistic." Or again: "Sometimes I feel like one who is on the sidelines, who has missed life itself."

Mandela may be released soon. If so, a new biography, with his full co-operation, may be possible. Fatima Meer's book, *Higher than Hope: Rolihlahla we love you*, (Skotaville, 1988), is full of interest, but it is not worthy of the man. It stops and starts several times, is full of gaps and

factual errors and is clearly a rushed job. Mis-spellings and errors litter the pages to such a degree that one wonders if the book was proof-read at all — one word is spelled three different ways in the space of ten lines.

Meer also writes in an over-heated style. Of the government's actions in 1953, for example, she says: "The Nationalists, insatiable in their need to dominate and mad with anxiety that they might not be able to do so eternally, extended the frontier of oppression." This sort of thing is simply nonsense — the government could hardly be said to be mad with anxiety even today, let alone in 1953.

But the book contains hundreds of Mandela's letters, has benefitted from Winnie Mandela's full co-operation, contains many photographs, and for all its faults, is pretty much compulsory reading for anyone who wants to understand this tragic and remarkable man. Most people are aware of the major public landmarks of Mandela's life: His role as ANC organiser, the Treason Trial, the Defiance

Campaign, the Rivonia Trial and his long incarceration on Robben Island and at Pollsmoor — the private man is less known.

**M**ANDELA was born the son of Nosekeni, one of the four wives of a Tembu chief, Henry Gadla. He lived in Nosekeni's hut, sleeping on mats, eating mealie meal and playing in the dust like any other little African country boy. He cannot have seen his father much, since Henry Gadla had to divide his time between his four families and in any case died when Nelson was only ten. Nosekeni was worried about her son — the chieftaincy would go to a son of the first wife. Paramount Chief Jongintaba stepped in, assumed fatherly responsibilities and decreed that since Nelson could not be a chief, he had better at least get a good education. Jongintaba paid for everything, coaxed and urged Nelson along, and set him on the road which led to his establishing (with Oliver Tambo) the first African law partnership in South Africa.

Little wonder that Mandela has always looked back so fondly on his rural roots or that in 1962 he could speak so lovingly from the dock of the rural idyll of Tembuland before the British came. "Then, our people lived peacefully under the democratic (sic) rule of their kings and moved freely and confidently up and down the country without let or hindrance. Then the country was our own." To read of Mandela's concern for the conservative countryside and the world of the chieftaincies is to marvel at Pretoria's squandered luck at having so moderate a man to deal with.

Arriving in Johannesburg in 1941, Mandela was quickly recruited into the ANC by the remarkable Walter Sisulu, the grandfather of a whole ANC generation. Sisulu adopted the young Mandela, put him up in his house, got him a job, got him into university, and paid his fees, while his wife, Albertina, found him a wife in their young cousin, Eveline. The other member of the trio was Mandela's law partner, Oliver Tambo.

The three men formed a tight little nucleus which dominated the ANC for decades, though, predictably enough, it was the two younger but better-educated men, Mandela and Tambo, who were to assume the leadership. Only Mandela's nephews, Kaiser and George Matanzima, were as close to Mandela as Tambo and Sisulu. To Mandela's great pain, they were later to betray the cause by leading the Transkei Bantustan to its spurious independence.

It was to Kaiser Matanzima that poor Eveline turned for help a few years later when it was clear that her marriage was in ruins, but even he could do nothing. Part of the problem was simply that Mandela was quite overpoweringly attractive to women and enjoyed their attentions. Partly it was a matter of temperament — Eveline was a quiet, devoted and dutiful wife, while Nelson had now met the beautiful, fiery and headstrong Winnie. In the



*"Sometimes I feel like one who is on the sidelines, who has missed life itself."*

end, Eveline read in the paper that Nelson was divorcing her. Tembi, the eldest of her three children, was devastated, but Eveline has always insisted that Nelson was a wonderful husband and father and that she has no reproaches. Mandela himself writes: "Eveline is pleasant and charming and I respected her as the marriage was crumbling. It would be quite unfair to blame her for the breakdown."

Winnie was something of a Xhosa aristocrat, the great-grand-daughter of the ferocious Chief Madikizela. Her mother, a teacher, had come under continual heavy criticism from her mother-in-law for being too much the modern, educated woman and not enough a good African wife. Winnie, spending equal time with each woman, was acutely and unhappily aware of this tension — and aware, too, that her mother had wanted her to be a boy. Winnie responded by becoming a complete tomboy and a wilful, troublesome child, which in turn led to savage beatings. Finally, her mother died having the boy she longed for and Winnie had to nurse this killer manchild. The terrible scars of this childhood doubtless do much to explain Winnie's impulsive and "difficult" temperament. She decided to become a social worker and at college quickly fell in with the Non-European Unity Movement

(NEUM), whose root-and-branch radicalism suited her temperament. It was only after she met Nelson that she drifted into ANC circles.

**I**T HAS become fairly conventional to see the politics of the 1950s as consisting essentially of the rise of ANC mass action and the State's even stronger resistance to it, culminating in Sharpeville. But there was another complicating factor which dogged the Mandelas. This was the ANC's increasing embarrassment in the face of the attacks of the Non-European Unity Movement and Pan Africanist Congress on the support the ANC gave to white candidates who would act as Native Representatives in Parliament and to traditional rural structures — the Bunga, the Transkei chiefs' council, the Native Representative Council — and to State institutions such as advisory boards and local councils.

All of this the NEUM and PAC denounced as collaboration, alleging that the ANC's tactics effectively handed leadership over to the small handful of white liberals and communists willing to act as its representatives "within the system". For the NEUM and PAC this was mere Uncle-Tomism and thus to be rejected: Non-whites must be led by non-whites and



ANNE ZIEMINSKI, Atropix

all state structures must be de-legitimated by the practice of boycotts. Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo had no answer to the boycott strategy — and they spent many anxious hours worrying how to avoid being outflanked, as in fact they continually were.

The turning-point was Sharpeville. The massacre left Mandela trembling, sick and bitterly aware how bad it made the ANC look: How could you carry on preaching non-violence when the other side was shooting your people down in scores? The ANC set up Umkhonto we Sizwe as its armed wing — the crime for which Mandela and Sisulu went to jail — and ANC policy hardened across the board.

Inevitably, part of this hardening was the ANC's complete capitulation to the boycott psychology, to the point where today it has become the chief orchestrator of anti-apartheid boycotts of every kind right across the world. There are considerable ironies in this. The first non-white intellectuals, the Cape Coloured schoolteachers of the NEUM, decided on the boycott tactic out of weakness: If non-whites could not stop the whites from winning across the board and setting up all the structures they wanted, at least non-whites could withhold their consent from such arrangements. Thus a tactic born of impotence gradually grew into a worldwide movement, expressing itself in a whole series of anti-South African boycotts (of goods, in sport, culture etc), which have now culminated in economic sanctions — a very potent force indeed. In the process, people have forgotten that the boycott was only a tactic. Now, crazily, it has become a principle in its own right, with results that are sometimes so ludicrous that the ANC, which once saw only too well the pitfalls of the boycott tactic, can find itself having to defend what was in fact their opponents' philosophy.

Another factor to bring much anguish to the Mandelas was the defection of Nelson's kinsmen, the Matanzimas, and the great rural revolt of 1959 in Pondoland. Winnie's father sided with Matanzima, while her brothers sided with the rebellious Intaba movement against him. In the bitter fighting that followed, Winnie's grandmother was stabbed and left paralysed and her father narrowly escaped in the course of an attack on his house. Winnie relates how, just after this happened, she and Nelson had to host an ANC meeting at their home. As a woman, she was strictly relegated to the kitchen, but after a while one of the guests came through and sat chatting with her about the attack on her father's house.

"Your father is a lucky bastard, we shall get him yet. We just don't know how he escaped through such a small window — such a big man. He must thank his lucky stars. He won't be so lucky next time."

**P**OOOR Winnie, dogged by one traumatic event after another. She was mercilessly harassed after Nelson's imprisonment. Between 1966 and 1969 she was charged three times and detained for a total of 491 days. In the next ten years, she was charged another three times and spent another six months in jail, and in 1977 she was summarily banished to the remote Free State hamlet of Brandfort — the police simply arrived in the early morning and started loading her furniture into a van to take it and her to a place she knew nothing about.

Winnie did wonderful work at Brandfort, setting up a clinic and giving new confidence to the oppressed and demoralised black population of the town. Her house was repeatedly burgled, attacked and vandalised. On one occasion she was interrogated by the infamous Major Theuns Swanepoel while having to listen

to the cries of a man being tortured in the next room. It was during this period that she learnt that her son had been killed in a car accident. Her daughter, Zinzi, who has stuck close to her mother and says: "I felt I was more or less raised by the police," has suffered terribly and endures continual bouts of depression. The other daughter, Zeni, has behaved more like the Xhosa aristocrat that she is and has married Prince Thumbumuzi of Swaziland.

Of all Mandela's sufferings in jail, none was worse than his agony over what was happening to Winnie: "Although I always put a brave face on it," he writes to Winnie, "I never get used to you being in the cooler. Few things disorganise my whole life as much as this particular type of hardship, which seems destined to stalk us for quite some time."

Moreover, as Meer somewhat awkwardly points out, rumours of Winnie's alleged infidelities were and are rife. Meer knows Mandela well (indeed, she was in the secret meeting before his capture) and we can probably rely on her account. Mandela, she writes, "blamed himself for her victimisation . . . he had a keen sense of his patriarchal obligations and his impotence was unbearable, and finally because he could not experience it in reality and know its reality, he apprehended it in his mind where it took on limitless proportion, and gruesome forms".

Mandela emerges from his letters as a very considerable figure, a man who writes well and reads widely and voraciously — visitors credit him with a striking knowledge of international affairs as well as a considerable literary and historical knowledge. He has, too, a clear independence of mind. On trial in 1959, he even declared that he personally would settle for 60 African seats in Parliament and a review of the situation after five years, adding that he didn't know what the ANC would say, but that was what he felt all the same.

For many people Nelson Mandela has, in effect, become a living saint, and it is difficult to get a more human view of the man. The symbol he has become, the African Christ on the cross, always blots out other perceptions.

Winnie, on the other hand, is at once lionised and unpopular. She lives in considerable style and until recently the Mandela "football team", a gang of young toughs has acted as her bodyguards.

**W**INNIE is exciting, however. She draws the crowds. When I went to hear her speak at the launch of Meer's book, there was standing room only, with the comrades from Mandela FC doing their war-dances in the foyer. Winnie was quickly to her stride, bringing us "greetings from the people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe". Departing wildly from ANC policy, she spoke of attacks on "soft targets" as a "regrettable necessity" and

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# MANDELA

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went on to instance the sort of targets that were OK — hanging judges, National Party MPs and community councillors.

Those who had exposed her dealings with Robert Brown, including the Weekly Mail, she condemned as “gutter journalists and traitors”, an open invitation to a necklacing. “The boiling kettle of Afrikaner domination has finally blown its lid . . . the apartheid regime is panicking to unproportional dimensions . . . the government is manipulating our children.” (The last of these remarks was an attempt to suggest that ordinary township youth could not have been responsible for the arson on her house: but I have not met a single person who believes the government were behind this. The township crowd watched the fire sullenly, and although Winnie issued a statement than-

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lig, maar nie onvrywillig omdat dit deur andere afgedwing word nie; dit is onvrywillig omdat dit deur die martelaar se eie gewete beveel word.

Die geval van Nelson Mandela, “Afrika se bekendste martelaar”, is hierby van kardinale belang. Al die spekulاسie oor sy moontlike vrylating, mis eintlik die punt. Die feit bly staan dat hy reeds ’n groot deel van sy lewe en dit wat vir ander mense hul hoogste goed is — vrye lewensjare — opgeoffer het vir sy ideaal van ’n nie-rassige, demokratiese Suid-Afrika. In hierdie verband is dit nodig dat ons onsself afvra wat die aard van sy offer is.

Vir ’n groot gedeelte van sy tronkstraf was Mandela ongetwyfelf, in terme van bostaande onderskeidings, ’n slagoffer. Sy politieke aktiwiteite voor sy gevangenneming, het wel ingehou dat hy dalk ’n persoonlike offer sal moet bring, maar dit is in laaste instansie deur andere op hom afgedwing.

Ten minste sedert die aanbod van vrylating, gekoppel aan die voorwaarde van die afswear van geweld, het sy situasie egter ingrypend verander. Vanaf daardie oomblik staan Mandela as’t ware self met sy sel se sleutel in sy eie hand. Daar was (en is) vir hom basies drie weë oop:

- Eerstens: aanvaar die aanbod, sweer geweld af, loop vry uit, en hou by die ooreenkoms. Dit sou egter behels dat hy alles verraai waarvoor hy gestaan het, en sy onderhorigheid aan wat genoem word die apartheidregime erken.

- Tweedens: om geweld af te sweer, die tronk te verlaat, maar dan tog weer die wapen op te neem. As dit basies om die gewapende stryd gaan, is daar heelwat vir hierdie uitweg te sê. Dit sou nie te moeilik wees om die gebruik van so ’n “noodleuen” te regverdig nie, seker nie in omstandighede waar geweld uit protes teen ’n regering ter sprake is nie. Tog het Mandela nie hierdie keuse gemaak nie.

- Derdens: om te weier om aan die voorwaardes te voldoen om geweld af te sweer. Hier gaan dit nie soseer om voortgesette geloof in geweld nie, as om ’n manifestasie van morele krag en waardig-

king them for their assistance, the fact is that nobody gave any assistance.)

During Winnie’s speech, an uproar could be heard in the foyer and members of the Mandela FC were despatched to sort it out (ie beat people up). In the end, however, dozens of angry young Africans burst in with placards denouncing Fatima Meer. Their quarrel had to do with the Phambili school which Meer had set up with US Embassy money for children expelled from township schools in the 1984-1986 uprising.

Fatima Meer is an old Congress hand, but she is also a Muslim and an admirer of Ayatollah Khomeini, who she believes is a force for the liberation of women. Indeed, the book launch was financed by an organisation called the Iranian Interest Section. One problem was that Meer, who has both a maverick and an authori-

heid. Dit is die weg wat Mandela (ten minste vir ’n lang tyd) gekies het.

Waar die tweede keuse leed vir ander inhou, kies Mandela die weg van leed aan homself. Ten spyte van die retoriek is Mandela se keuse hier in wese ’n keuse teen geweld — hy kies immers nie die tweede opsie wat wel vir hom oop is nie. In die Ghandiaanse tradisie van passiewe verset (*satyagraha*) het ons hier eintlik ’n klassieke geval van burgerlike ongehoorsaamheid: Mandela weier om ’n bevel van die owerheid te gehoorsaam (“sê dat jy geweld afsweer”), wel wetend dat hy daarvoor sal moet boet, en hy neem in die proses nie sy toevlug tot geweld nie.

**W**AT is dan uiteindelik die aard van Mandela se nalatenskap: moet sy offer gesien word as ’n verdelende keuse ten gunste van onderlinge geweld, of is dit eerder ’n samebindende simbool van selfopoffering ter wille van ’n groter ideaal? Die mitestruktuur van ’n nuwe nie-rassige Suid-Afrika kan nie gevestig word sonder die voorbeeld van uitstaande figure wat hulself ter wille daarvan opoffer nie. Mandela se nalatenskap is daarom nie dié van ’n gewelddenaar teenoor andere nie, maar van ’n martelaar ter wille van ander, ter wille van ’n nuwe Suid-Afrika: ’n ideaal waarvoor hy gesê het dat hy wil lewe, maar waarvoor hy ook bereid is om te sterf.

Hiermee word martelaarskap nie aangemoedig of goedgekeur nie. Trouens, soos reeds gesê, dit is in wese ’n onpropageerbare begrip. Die grootste taak van nasiebou lê in elk geval eerder op die alledaagse en rasonele vlak van gee en neem, van kompromie, en nie op die weg van irrasionele oortuiging of onwrikbare beginsels en irrasionele optrede nie. Sogenaamde “martelaarskap” kan maklik onttaard, goedkoop en teatraal word. Waar dit egter eg is — outentiek — is dit ’n waardevolle bousteen wat selfs nie deur die mees rasonele bouers weggegooi mag word nie. ■

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tarian reputation, accepted 600 children into a school for 200, and that not all of those children had been expelled from their previous schools for no reason. Before long, pupils and teachers had united against her and the way she ran the school, while she herself was denouncing “a small minority of troublemakers” — a turn of phrase we seem to have heard before.

The angry Phambali pupils ran in, seized the microphone and started denouncing Meer. The result was a riot, with generalised fighting between the pupils and the Mandela FC. Winnie then took the mike, sided strongly with her old friend, Fatima Meer, denounced the pupils as a disgrace to the African race and said she’d see them afterwards. Meer closed the school down the next day, on the eve of exams, and was thereafter systematically unavailable for comment.

**I** SAT through the evening trying to think that anyone who had been through what Winnie had been through might act like this. When, during her speech, she referred to the bombing of soft targets, a man about three feet away from me shouted: “Amandla!” I looked at this man. The strength of his features and the bitterness of his expression spoke quite clearly of centuries of oppression, exploitation, torture and killing. What it meant was: I am so full of hatred for what has been done, and is being done, to my people that the more extreme and outrageous the things you say, the more I like it. It was the sort of face you have to respect.

And that is a good part of Winnie’s secret. The detail of what she says doesn’t really matter, because what she’s always saying in different ways is: “NO, NO, a thousand times NO.” And after all that has been done in this country, after all the torture, the brutalisation, the denial of humanity, there is a fair-sized market for that. The whole point of the boycott psychology was that it offered a way of saying No to the whole system. That’s what made it irresistible.

At the moment black politics in South Africa are all about resistance, defiance, struggle, about saying NO. It has to be that way. But a terrible burden rests on the black leadership of the future. Unless that leadership is of a decidedly higher calibre than we have seen elsewhere in Africa, the awful possibility looms that Africans here too might come to look back on a lost golden age of white minority rule.

Which brings me back to Nelson Mandela — undoubtedly the ablest black leader of his generation. What South Africa has lost through his incarceration goes beyond injustice and personal tragedy. The country has needed Mandela as a leader. It needs him now. ■

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