

The capacities of the people versus a predominant, militarist, ethno-nationalist elite: democratisation in South Africa c. 1973 - 97

Kenneth Good

The international and domestic settings

From around 1970 to 1990 popular democracy made notable advances in many parts of the world against entrenched dictatorships, both communist and anti-communist, from Poland and the GDR (aka Stasiland) through Portugal, Chile and the Philippines. In Poland, the Solidarity trade union achieved a membership of some ten million at its height; the Stasiland surveillance state was swept away, not just with the fall of the Berlin wall, but after a series of large demonstrations in the cities proved to the people that their rulers possessed neither efficacy nor legitimacy; in Lisbon, a "Carnation Revolution" led by the military fresh from contact with national liberation forces in Portugal's African colonies, backed by communist and other popular tendencies at home, brought an end to a long-established, quasi-fascist dictatorship; and in the Philippines, a successful mass uprising against the US-backed regime of Ferdinand Marcos, presented the modern idea of "people power" to the world.

South Africa was part of this popular democratic upsurge too, as an advancing capitalist economy, produced new skilled black working classes possessed of the capacities to form trade unions and other community groups ready and able to push for democratisation beyond the electoral confines of the liberal / representative model.

But these domestic popular aspirations had to compete for attention in the outside world with an externally based armed struggle led by the African National Congress (ANC) whose leaders were mostly in exile and in prison. Two quite different processes of change were thus in contention in and around the country: the popular one stressing openness and accountability of elites to the people, and the other emphasising armed struggle led by established nationalist elites with, it is now quite clear, decidedly hegemonic and secretive tendencies. The latter forces aimed at liberation from an apartheid system almost universally condemned, and it was led by such renowned figures as Nelson Mandela, who was to spend 27 years in prison before his release on route to state power a few years later.

While the supporters of democratisation in the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the trade unions did not directly seek to challenge the historic role of the ANC, the latter, as the 1980s wore on, showed an increasing intolerance for the values upheld by the UDF, like criticism and self-criticism of elites and non-violence. To the outside world, it was Mandela and the armed struggle led by the ANC which constituted the totality of change in South Africa. The ANC, it is now

clear, aimed at the elevation of its armed struggle as justification for its long-term rule, and the obliteration of the aims and achievements of the democratisation movement. It is the aim of this paper to disentangle the two inter-twined processes, to accord to the democratisation process the distinctions it deserves as a world-historical aspiration of its time, and to reveal some of the true costs of the ANC's armed struggle not least to the young men and women who served as its rank-and-file.

The well-springs of democratisation

South Africa possessed in the early 1990s a relatively industrialised and diversified economy. As the country approached the year of majority rule, 1994, industry contributed some 37 per cent of gross domestic production (GDP), of which manufacturing represented 25 per cent. It was easily the strongest capitalist economy in Africa. Its GDP of some \$133 billion ranked it around thirtieth in the world, or twenty third in terms of purchasing power. In regard to employment, agriculture contributed about 10 per cent of the national total, industry 25 per cent and services 64 per cent. There was a well developed infrastructure built upon roads, railways and sea and air ports, extensive urbanisation, and technological and scientific resources superior to anything else in Africa. Despite the manifold distortions and wastefulness of the apartheid system, the developmental capacities of the state were high.¹

The exigencies of advanced capitalist development offered big opportunities to black workers. In the 1950s they had been confined to unskilled labour, but a burgeoning economy and an ever-growing state bureaucracy required increasing numbers of black clerical and junior executive workers, and thus in turn a big increase in black secondary and tertiary education. Between 1965 and 1975, the numbers of black pupils attending secondary schools rose almost five fold to some 319,000. Industrial capitalists made their own contribution to new class formation from the end of the 1960s, reorganizing the labour force towards reliance upon black skilled workers, and pressured the state into corresponding policy changes; from the early 1970s, government made "far more money available for urban black schools". In greater Soweto, for instance, there were eight secondary schools in 1972; 20 by 1976, with a three-fold increase in their student intake, and 55 by the end of 1984.

The 1980 census had revealed that a majority of the black population were under 21. Secondary student numbers rose from 600,000 in 1980 to more than one million in 1984, boosted by a new school building programme at that time.²

¹ Good, "Accountable to Themselves: Predominance in Southern Africa", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35, 4, 1997, pp. 547-8, and Tom Lodge, "South Africa: Democracy and Development in a Post-Apartheid Society", in Adrian Leftwich (ed.), *Democracy and Development: Theory and Practice*, Cambridge, 1996, p. 196.

² Jonathan Hyslop, "School Student Movements and State Education Policy: 1972-87", in William Cobbett and Robin Cohen (eds.), *Popular Struggles in South Africa*, Sheffield and London, Africa World Press and James Currey, 1988, pp. 184-85 and 191.

In consequence, secondary schooling was transformed from being the privileged resource of a black elite into a “mass phenomenon” with an “urban school-based culture and consciousness”.

High school students in the conglomerate of Soweto were well placed to draw together literate youths on a large scale, utilising networks of extra-mural associations, and assuming, graphically in June 1976, political leadership; protests against inferior education and enforced Afrikaans teaching, met police repression and spread nationwide.³ New activist local leaders emerged. Popo Molefe, for example, was born in 1952 to a father who was a day labourer and his mother a domestic worker; all the family, he later recalled, were “extremely poor”. He was trucked to Soweto from Sophiatown when the latter was declared a white area in 1955 and achieved Standard 10 (the leaving certificate).⁴ He helped organize the march of 16 June. Murphy Morobe was born a little later in Soweto to a father who was a driver. In 1976 he was in Standard 10 at the Morris Isaacson High School, and also helped organize the student demonstration. Both were active in various groups and became prominent in the UDF.

Access to tertiary education also broadened. In 1960 there were fewer than 800 blacks at universities, excluding distance-learning programmes offered by the University of South Africa (UNISA), but by 1983 there were about 20,000 at university with another 12,700 enrolled at UNISA. Within the twelve year period, 1958-70, the numbers had arisen in excess of 200 per cent.⁵ A big step forward in black student organization came in 1969 with the formation of the South African Students Organization (SASO) led by Steve Biko and a harbinger of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). SASO, in Gwala's view, transformed black universities into “major sites of political struggle” and connected students to the wider political struggles. By 1972 SASO was represented on all black campuses and it had an estimated membership of about 6,000.

Biko's ideas were radical and profound. He aimed to revitalise a demoralised older generation, and he believed, according to Halisi, that political action had to approximate to a new way of life. Mass education could be extended by committed intellectuals with a knowledge of popular culture who would energise the oppressed. But for an emancipatory politics to achieve success, new values and practices would have to be *prefigured* in the opposition movement.⁶

³ Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991*, Cape Town and Oxford, David Philip and James Currey, 2000, p. 11.

⁴ Steven Mufson, *Fighting Years: Black Resistance and the Struggle for a New South Africa*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1990, p. 43.

⁵ Seekings, *op.cit.*, p. 12 and Nkosinathi Gwala, “State Control, Student Politics and the Crisis in Black Universities”, in Cobbett and Cohen, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

⁶ Gwala, *op.cit.*, p. 176 and C.R.D. Halisi, “Biko and Black Consciousness Philosophy: An Interpretation”, in N. Barney Pityana, Mamphela Ramphele, Malusi Mpumlwana and Lindy Wilson, *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, Cape Town and London, David Philip and Zed Books, pp. 101 and 108-9, his emphasis.

Natal Medical School offered Mamphela Ramphele not only socially important knowledge and skills, but also, she said, "an environment for the transformation of my life". She became an activist in SASO and a close collaborator with Biko, and the 1970s were for her "a time of immense personal growth." She went ahead through various community activities, "growing up the hard way."⁷

Black workers employed in manufacturing mushroomed in number from 308,000 in 1960 to 781,000 in 1980. In the country's industrial heartland of Gauteng, the workforce rose from 169,000 to 375,000 and by the latter year around Johannesburg "unskilled labour accounted for less than half" of all black employment there.⁸ By the 1980s black workers had become the dominant social force in manufacturing.

What these big changes represented politically was the emergence of key new social categories, the overlapping groups of youth and students, and of skilled and semi-skilled urban workers, each of whom, and particularly the latter, possessed a capacity for organization and action. This was their vital new acquisition within an advancing capitalist economy. Organization was precisely what the Levellers and Diggers had so gravely lacked in 1650 in the English Revolution. Gerrard Winstanley had sought to establish a living communism of small cultivators on England's unutilised lands, but he knew, notes Hill, "the danger of appealing to an uneducated democracy, and could not find in contemporary conditions of society the social force which would put through the changes necessary even to make the common people aware of what might be done."⁹

Black students and workers were altogether of a different mind and capability in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, and it was their potential strengths which made them dangerous to established nationalist elites. When Thabo Mbeki, senior leader of the ANC in exile, became aware in the early 1970s that Black Consciousness was beginning to radicalise young men and women, he did not welcome this as a creative development but as a potential challenge to the ANC's proclaimed vanguard position and strategy of armed struggle. He started to identify the leadership of the movement, working towards their incorporation into the established party and the dilution of their ideas.¹⁰

⁷ Ramphele, *A Life*, Cape Town and Johannesburg, David Philip, 1996, pp. 57, 65 and 72.

⁸ Seekings, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁹ Christopher Hill (ed.), *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 40.

¹⁰ Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, for instance, was vice-president of SASO when he recruited her to the ANC with instructions to enlist others in the Movement and influence their debates. Adrian Hadland and Jovial Rantao, *The Life and Times of Thabo Mbeki*, Rivonia, Zebra Press, 1999, p. 39.

The UDF

The internal dynamics nevertheless continued to develop and gather momentum. From the late 1970s, a ramifying range of community groups had arisen, first in Soweto and the Eastern Cape and then nation-wide, campaigning around issues such as housing, rents, bus fares and education. These struggles, says Swilling, steadily consolidated a political culture emphasising principles of non-collaboration with government institutions, non-racialism and, he notes, "democracy and mass-based direct action aimed at transforming urban living conditions." In January 1983, Allan Boesak called for the formation of a front to oppose specific apartheid constitutional changes, and after a series of regional conferences, the United Democratic Front was launched in Cape Town in August. Boesak says that fifteen hundred people were present, representing 500 organisations and all sectors of society. The listing of the Front's eventual affiliates included trade unions, youth and student movements, women's and religious groups, civic associations, political parties and a range of support and professional groups. Within the next few years, the Front embraced almost 1,000 affiliated groups. Because of the UDF's capacity to provide national political and ideological coordination to these affiliates, radical political action "assumed an increasingly organised form", says Swilling, "enhancing its power and effectiveness."¹¹

As previously with the BCM, the arrival of the UDF was not welcomed by the ANC. It "came as a shock to Thabo and the rest of the ANC leadership", note Hadland and Rantao, and they quote Mac Maharaj adding, "they didn't believe it would happen." The well-informed Shubin agrees, and recalls an ANC friend telling him soon after: "If some of our people say that the UDF was made by us, don't believe them."¹² The distortion, however, was unquestioningly accepted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with possible impact on its findings (discussed further below). It is part of the ideological obfuscation that surrounds the UDF that it is still confidently asserted that the UDF was "essentially a front for the outlawed liberation movement."¹³

The UDF did not look, sound or act like the highly centralised, secretive ANC.

It had three levels of leadership: national, regional and local, with much or most action concentrated in the lowest tier. A National Executive Committee (NEC) was composed of three presidents, a secretary, a publicity secretary, treasurer and representatives of the regions. Initially only the secretary, Popo Molefe, and

¹¹ Mark Swilling, "The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt", in Cobbett and Cohen, *op.cit.*, pp. 90-91, and Allan Boesak, *Running With Horses: Reflections of an Accidental Politician*, Cape Town, Joho Publishers, 2009, pp. 115 and 157.

¹² Hadland and Rantao, *op.cit.*, p. 49, and Vladimir Shubin, *ANC: A View From Moscow*, Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1999, p. 250.

¹³ Allister Sparks, *Beyond the Miracle*, Johannesburg and Cape Town, Jonathan Ball, 2003, p. 178. In another false construction, the UDF was merely "the ANC's predecessor and, in part, its internal surrogate in the 1980s." R.W Johnson, *South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country Since the End of Apartheid*, London, Penguin Books, 2009, p. 19.

the publicity secretary, Patrick Terror Lekota, were paid and full-time. Mohammed Valli Moosa was soon added as assistant secretary, and eventually the number of officials grew to "about eighty." The NEC made administrative decisions, and in 1985, given the great difficulty of convening large conferences, a National Working Committee became in practice the top policy making body. Local UDF affiliates "maintained their autonomy."¹⁴

For Boesak, who became the elected patron of the Front, it was the spirit of the new group which provided its distinctiveness. "Spontaneity was one of the strong points of the UDF", he says, "and this would time and again catch the government, and by the same token, the ANC, off guard." As its affiliates grew in number, "every town, every township with any kind of organisation" wanted to join. From the very beginning, he goes on, "the UDF knew (and the ANC feared) that much action in the course of struggle was performance going to be spontaneous', unplanned and uncontrolled. "It was also the UDF's hallmark of authenticity, and it was unavoidable in a truly people-driven movement." The UDF coordinated its affiliates, brought them under a reasonably strong national umbrella, and provided a platform and political stature.

Small associations also gained access to funding, some of which came through the Foundation for Peace and Justice (FPJ) which Boesak headed.¹⁵ Above all, he adds, there was "the power of the UDF to inspire". Within a year, the UDF became a formidable organisation with support at levels and among people that no organisation in South Africa had ever achieved before.¹⁶

According to Swilling, the most important and politically sophisticated leaders in the UDF came from the ranks of BCM of the early and mid-1970s. These included he says Mkhuseleli Jack from Port Elizabeth, and Popo Molefe, Terror Lekota and Aubrey Mokoena from Johannesburg. Many UDF activists of the 1980s had been politicised earlier within BCM. Activists also came from the experiences gained in the construction of community, youth, trade union and student organisations during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and these people became increasingly important during the mid-1980s. According to Swilling, two other characteristics of the UDF's leadership stood out: its "heterodox social and class composition', and the fact that it was both multi-class and that a high proportion came from 'poor working-class backgrounds."¹⁷

¹⁴ Ineke van Kessel, *"Beyond Our Wildest Dreams": The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa*, Charlottesville and London, University Press of Virginia, 2000, p. 24.

¹⁵ And which he also exploited. Through the 1990s, Boesak siphoned off funds from Danchurch, Paul Simon, the Swedish Development Agency and other donors, intended for FPJ, to establish a range of private businesses. He was jailed but received a presidential pardon in 2005. R.W. Johnson, *op.cit.*, pp. 19 and 62-63.

¹⁶ Boesak, *op.cit.*, pp. 115 and 157-64.

¹⁷ Swilling, *op.cit.*, p. 96. This balanced assessment should be contrasted with Seekings' contrary insistence: "there were very few UDF leaders with any sustained experience on the shop floor. Workers made it into leadership positions in the trade unions, but not in the UDF," *op.cit.*, p. 311. In another view, "although the UDF was largely a movement of the poor, a disproportionate

Moving from an initial reactive phase to pressing state initiatives, and from the Front's failures to cope with the levels of mobilisation that arose, the UDF established by early 1985 "the beginning of strong working relationships between community organisations, student movements and the trade unions." Swilling enumerates them at some 400,000 students and 800,000 workers.¹⁸

Mkhuseli Jack became a prominent community activist and a UDF leader with both feet firmly on the ground. He was born in the Eastern Cape in May 1958, the son of a farm labourer and a domestic worker. He led protests in Port Elizabeth in 1975 for youths from rural schools—including himself-- to be admitted to city schools, and after three months the schools relented. He was arrested in 1976 for protesting against the poor quality of black education, and shortly after he was among the founders of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), the high school equivalent of Biko's SASO, later the UDF's largest affiliate with 42 branches. In 1983 he was elected to the executive of the Port Elizabeth Civic Organisation (PEBCO), where he became known, according to Mufson, for his good nature, pragmatism and self-confidence.

As a spokesman for the consumer boycott movement in the city, the 28 year old Jack "strode about as though he were mayor". White businesspeople negotiated with the UDF for safe passage for their vehicles, while the Front also fixed prices for staple commodities in black-owned stores to prevent price gouging during boycotts, and issued permits to street vendors. He was said to have an instinct for what ordinary people wanted and the burdens they could bear. The first consumer boycott was called off after four months, to the apparent annoyance of some national UDF leaders (who wanted to stage a so-called "Black Christmas"); but when businesspeople urged him to bring a second boycott to an early end in November 1985, Jack declared: "We must talk, but not yet. It isn't the mood of the people." He was frequently detained from 1976 onwards, including two six-month stints in solitary confinement and torture in the form of "the helicopter".¹⁹

Matthew Goniwe also seems to have typified the activist, community-based core of the UDF. Born in 1948 in Craddock in the Eastern Cape, he was the son of a domestic servant and a firewood trader, a former political prisoner, who became a magnetic young teacher and headmaster. He founded the Craddock Residents' Association (CRADORA) in 1983, in opposition to rent increases in the town's Lingelihle township, home to 17,000 people. He set about organising the community. The township was divided into seven zones, and about 40 cadres travelled from house to house to explain CRADORA's purpose and to encourage

share of the original national leadership came from a radicalised middle-class intelligentsia". Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson, *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s*, London, Hurst and Company, 1992, p. 55. Much depends of course on whether class is defined by family origins or current position, and there is the bias of the observer, which seems present in some of Seekings' judgements.

¹⁸ Swilling, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-03 and Boesak, *op.cit.*, Preface.

¹⁹ Mufson, *op.cit.*, pp. 121-25 and Lodge and Nasson, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

attendance at public meetings and in electing representatives from each street. The representatives then underwent training to “emphasise that as leaders they had to be exemplary in every respect.” This was the time-consuming but effective process of mobilising participation in the street committee system. If CRADORA called a meeting at four in the afternoon, the entire population of the township would be assembled by six. The system created, in Goniwe’s words, an activist gridiron so dense that “even the family is seen as a structure of the organisation.”

Goniwe’s legacy was to create over six months a string of tightly coordinated, small-town community movements. He helped to launch civic associations and youth organizations in Adelaide, Fort Beaufort, Cookhouse, Kirkwood, Hanover, Colesberg, Alexandria, Kenton-on-Sea, Steytlerville, Motherwell and Noupoot. It was such deep organisations that made the UDF “a formidable force in the small towns and villages of the windswept Karoo plateau.” While Goniwe was a member of the ANC, he appeared to have been influenced by Biko’s ideas. Shortly before his death he wrote: “if we are instruments of change, we must epitomise the society we want to bring about. People see in us the society we want to bring about.”²⁰

As many activists indicated but only a few analysts realised, much more than just resistance against apartheid was going on. In Mufson’s important recognition: as millions of blacks were swept into political activity, participation on a scale, he stressed, never before witnessed, “they were not only trying to destroy a repressive system, but attempting to create a new nation.”²¹ Key characteristics of the new society they were striving to establish were democracy and open, popular participation. Writing in the later 1980s, Swilling, like Boesak, reported that there were very few black communities where UDF affiliates did not exist. The strength of the UDF, furthermore, “derives primarily from the popularity and organisational capacity of its affiliates,” even though they differed considerably in size and effectiveness. The Front’s national executive did not constitute a significant organisational force, partly because most of the leadership had spent years in detention or hiding, but the UDF’s activities were nonetheless rooted among the exploited people. When the UDF was hardly one year old, a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council found that the largest single reason why people supported the UDF—expressed by 35.6 per cent of those surveyed—was that it “fights for democracy”. The second main reason—identified by 17.1 per cent of respondents—was that “it solves our problems”.²²

A few years later, democratisation assumed organisational forms, as alternative organs of people’s power were promoted by many UDF activists. The concept of

²⁰ Lodge and Nasson, *op.cit.*, p. 75 and Mufson, *op.cit.*, p. 2. He and three other CRADORA leaders were abducted, killed and their mutilated bodies left by the roadside.

²¹ Mufson, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

²² Swilling, *op.cit.*, pp. 106-07.

people's power,²³ or rudimentary organs of self-government, emerged in late 1985-1986. The dynamic was first observed in Craddock, where CRADORA began taking over some of the state's defunct administrative roles, such as the payment of pensions, setting up a literacy programme and a child and family welfare centre. The process was endorsed by Popo Molefe, and from early 1986, the Front's theoretical journal *Isizwe* stated that the call "the people shall govern", enshrined in the Freedom Charter, was "*beginning to happen in the course of our struggle*. It is not for us to sit back and merely dream of the day that the people shall govern. It is our task to realise that goal now." Involved were street committees and people's courts, and services such as dispute settlement, policing, refuse collection and health care. UDF leaders acknowledged that they were learning from the creativity of the masses."²⁴

By 1987, the UDF's conceptualisation of democracy embraced an awareness of the inadequacies of liberal parliamentary representation, taking it well beyond the ideas and practice of the liberal model. Existing parliamentary institutions were insufficient, not just because they excluded the bulk of the people, but for more substantive reasons. For *New Era*, a Cape Town publication affiliated to the UDF, democracy meant "the ability of the broad working masses to participate in and control all dimensions of their lives", not just "some liberal pluralistic debating society". Many UDF statements accepted, say Lodge and Nasson, that real democracy implied popular participation, where leaders were the bearers of a popular mandate and were accountable directly to the organisation's membership. Two further propositions were entailed: community-based self-governing initiatives would establish the foundations of democracy before a formal transition to majority rule, and that such emerging structures would be non-hierarchical.²⁵

Morobe presented a comprehensive statement of the UDF's thinking in 1987: he accepted that "parliamentary-type representation in itself represents a very limited and narrow idea of democracy".²⁶ The UDF's view of democracy was much broader and deeper, it involved participatory forms and it was being built

²³ The term people power first entered international discourse in the Philippines c. early 1986 in the rising mass opposition to the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Amado Mendoza Jr, "'People Power' in the Phillipines, 1983-86", chapter in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds.), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 179.

²⁴ Swilling, *op.cit.*, pp. 104-05 and Seekings, "The Development of Strategic Thought in South Africa's Civic Movements, 1977-90" in Glenn Adler and Jonny Steinberg, *From Comrades to Citizens*, Basingstoke and New York, Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. 71-73, original emphasis.

²⁵ Lodge and Nasson, *op.cit.*, pp. 131-32.

²⁶ Murphy Morobe became acting publicity secretary of the UDF after the arrest of Lekota. He was detained in mid-1987 under emergency conditions, but regained freedom in late 1988. His paper, "Towards a People's Democracy: The UDF View", was delivered on his behalf to the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa in May, and then published in part in the *Review of African Political Economy*, 40, in December 1987.

dynamically in the here and now. Democracy was “one of the aims or goals of our struggle” and also

the means by which we conduct the struggle. This refers to the democratic character of our existing mass-based organisations... By developing active, mass-based democratic organisations and democratic practices within these organisations, we are laying the basis for a future democratic South Africa.

The creation of democratic *means* is for us as important as having democratic *goals* as our objective... What is possible in the future depends on what we are able to create and sustain now. A democratic South Africa will not be fashioned only after transformation of political power to the majority has taken place... The creation of a democratic South Africa can only become a reality with the participation of millions of South Africans in the process - a process which has already begun in the townships, factories and schools of our land...

Our democratic aim is therefore control over every aspect of our lives, and not just the right (important as it is) to vote for a central government every four to five years... A democratic solution in South Africa involves all South Africans, and in particular the working-class, having control over all areas of daily existence - from national policy to housing, from schooling to working conditions, from transport to consumption of food... When we say that the people shall govern, we mean at all levels and in all spheres, and we demand that there be real, effective control on a daily basis... In other words, we are talking about direct as opposed to indirect political representation, mass participation rather than passive docility and ignorance, a momentum where ordinary people can do the job themselves, rather than waiting for their local MP to intercede on their behalf... The rudimentary organs of people's power that have begun to emerge in South Africa (street committees, defence committees, shop-steward structures, student representative councils, parent / teacher / student associations) represent in many ways the beginnings of the kind of democracy that we are striving for.²⁷

The Front's participatory democracy not only invested faith in the capacities of working-class men and women to govern themselves, but also adopted a highly critical approach to the power and action of their own political elites. In the “basic principles of our organisational democracy”, the UDF presented vital and creative measures for combating elitism within its own ranks and other democratic bodies:

1. Elected Leadership, at all levels, periodically re-elected and recallable; “No single individual must become irreplaceable”;
2. Collective Leadership; “leadership skills, experience and knowledge must be spread, not hoarded”;
3. Mandates and Accountability; leaders must “operate within the delegated mandates of their positions and delegated duties”;
4. Reporting and Reporting Back (by leaders to the membership); and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.

5. Criticism and Self-Criticism of and by elites; “we do not believe that any of our members are beyond criticism, neither are organisations and strategies beyond reproach”. These principles, he said, were “fundamental weapon[s] of our struggle”.²⁸

Under worsening circumstances the Front strove to uphold its democratic norms. Pressures built up on the Front as state violence escalated, children as young as six were deliberately killed by police, and youthful activists responded with cruel punishment against informers real and imagined. Boesak relates that he was taken by “utter surprise at the speed of events” as “our own brutalisation” began. Between 1984 and 1987 there had been rather more than 300 deaths through “necklacing” but in just six months in 1986 there were 220. For Boesak, the principle of non-violence ranked for the UDF along side that of spontaneity, inspiration and democratisation, where it raised immense problems for the means and ends equation, of the good future society arising in the practice of the here and now. Violence was antithetical to the establishment of democratic norms and institutions.

Others took a different view, and he quotes Cheryl Carolus, a leading figure in the Front—later close to the ANC—observing: “Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword.” Support for Carolus’s thinking came from Winnie Mandela when she said, on 13 April 1986 in Munsieville, that it was “with our boxes of matches and our necklaces” that liberation would be achieved.²⁹ Violent struggle had been most authoritatively and exclusively endorsed by the ANC at its Kabwe Conference in Zambia in June 1985 when Joe Slovo, then chief of staff of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), affirmed that there was “No Middle Road”, and the only acceptable strategy was the revolutionary overthrow of apartheid.³⁰ The democratisation movement was seemingly on notice.

These developments impacted heavily on the internal dynamics of the UDF.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85. Morobe’s organisational democracy represented an implicit rebuttal to the influential strictures of Michels who had famously asserted that while “organisation was the weapon of the weak in their struggle with the strong”, simultaneously “who says organisation says oligarchy”. Organisation inevitably gave birth to “the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators.” He exposed his own highly elitist intentions when he also said that an important reason for oligarchical domination was “the perennial incompetence of the masses”. Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, New York, Dover Publications, 1959, pp. 21-22 and 401, 407.

²⁹ Her full statement, recorded on videotape, was: “We have no guns—we have only stones, boxes of matches and petrol. Together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches and our necklaces we shall liberate this country.” Emma Gilbey, *The Lady: The Life and Times of Winnie Mandela*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1993, pp. 145-6. In 1996 the ANC declared that necklacing was “never the policy of the ANC or UDF/MDM”, and suggested that it had been initiated by the [apartheid] state for propaganda purposes. They also noted that young MK cadres vigorously defended the practice. ANC, “Statement to the [TRC]”, 19 August 1996, pp. 122-24.

³⁰ Boesak, *op.cit.*, pp. 167-183 and Lodge and Nasson, *op.cit.*, pp. 91 and 142

By late 1987, most of its activists were either in prison (70 per cent of detainees then were believed to be members of UDF affiliates), in hiding or dead, and the Front's national and regional leadership had been "decapitated";³¹ it was banned shortly after, but regrouped as the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) later in 1988. State repression ensured that power shifted in practice within the UDF to key officials—Valli Moosa as acting general secretary, Morobe in charge of publicity, and Azhar Cachalia as national treasurer. Decisions could rarely be made at this time on the basis of mandated positions, and the national leadership necessarily exercised "considerable latitude".

The Front nevertheless "maintained an impressive level" in terms of its leaders reporting back to the membership and in the recognition of the importance of criticism of leadership and their own self-criticism—the UDF's leaders were in fact "among the most focussed of its critics". It was Molefe, for instance, who reported to the 1985 national conference that the organization was "trailing behind the masses"; and Moosa, as acting secretary in Molefe's absence, who informed the 1987 national general council that the Front had been unable to maintain its regional structures.³² And it was in the same principle that elites should be accountable to the people for their actions, that Morobe and Cachalia publicly condemned the depredations in Soweto of Madikizela-Mandela, touted as the Mother of the Nation, in February 1989, considered in detail below.

The trade unions and COSATU

But the UDF was not alone inside South Africa in upholding democratisation as its primary concern. The ANC's decision in 1961 to embark upon an externally based armed struggle had centralised political attention upon the apartheid state and its supposed overthrow, and a decade of quiescence resulted. This changed dramatically, however, in early 1973, when over 100,000 black workers in Durban and Pinetown embarked on a series of spontaneous strikes against their work conditions signalling, in Webster and Adler's terms, the emergence of "a democratic movement within the country harnessed to independent working-class organization." Thereafter, in uneven fashion and with many setbacks, the unions embarked on a "radical reform strategy", utilising their organisational capacities to both mobilise and restrain their members in negotiations with the state and capital for agreed upon settlements. Through the late 1970s, Freidman stresses, they "survived", and demonstrated to their members that they had a voice in an economy in need of skilled black workers. Through incremental means they gradually forced the powerful "to share decisions they [we]re

³¹ Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change: The Political Economy of Transition*, London and Cape Town, Zed Books and UCT Press, 1998, pp. 58-59 and Lodge and Nasson, *op.cit.*, p.88.

³² Seekings, *The UDF*, pp. 305-06.

accustomed to take alone." This was a broad and reformist democratisation far more radical and practical than the strategy pursued by the ANC.³³

The trade union leader, Alec Erwin, wrote in 1985 that they aimed to win "both full democracy and non-racialism", building them now in the factories and townships, "through organisations whose leaders were accountable to their members and in which activists shared their skills with workers." Unions would be "laboratories for democracy" where workers made their own decisions and resisted anyone who tried to decide for them.³⁴

Embedded in the capitalist economy, employment, union membership and trade union density all grew rapidly 1979-1986:

Year	Employment (non-agric.)	TU membership	Density (%) ³⁵
1979	4,560,868	701,758	15.4
1980	4,712,051	808,853	17.1
1981	4,868,951	1,054,405	21.6
1982	4,915,636	1,225,454	24.9
1983	4,839,555	1,273,890	26.3
1984	4,900,571	1,406,302	28.7
1985	5,036,393	1,391,423	27.6
1986	5,093,918	1,698,157	33.3

In November 1985 the country's biggest black unions merged to form the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). It was South Africa's largest and most potent popular organisation, with 450,000 dues-paying members, soon to be doubled in number. It immediately called for wider union rights, equal pay for equal work and the introduction of a national minimum wage, and emphasised its political goals including disinvestment by foreign companies, the withdrawal of troops from the townships and the unbanning of COSAS. Its president was Elijah Barayi, a 53 year old personnel assistant at a gold mine, and its general secretary was Jay Naidoo aged then not quite 31.³⁶

³³ Glenn Adler and Eddie Webster, "Introduction", in Adler and Webster, *Democratisation in South Africa, 1985-1997*, Basingstoke and New York, Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. 1-3, Steven Friedman, *Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions, 1970-1984*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987, pp. 120-1, and Friedman and Mark Shaw, *Power in Partnership?: Trade Unions, Forums and the Transition*, in Adler and Webster, *op.cit.*, 190-2.

³⁴ Quoted in *Building Tomorrow Today*, p. 499.

³⁵ Ian Macun, "Growth, Structure and Power in the South African Union Movement" in Adler and Webster, *op.cit.*, p. 60

³⁶ He was an experienced unionist, and associated with the UDF, but daunted initially that "a person of Indian ancestry [should be] leading an almost exclusively African organisation." But

COSATU, says Mufson, united “the most powerful forces and personalities” in the black unions. Firstly, the unions which had been part of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) which arose in the wake of the 1973 Durban actions. The second component in COSATU was unions affiliated with the UDF, which had grown quickly after the labour reforms of 1979 but remained largely only at a regional level.

The third element was the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Its importance was more than the fact that it was the country’s largest union. It had potency as well as size. Half a million workers had laboured in the gold and coal mines that built South Africa’s industrial economy, bringing, for instance, 606 tons of gold to the surface in 1986, accounting for 42.3 per cent of the country’s foreign exchange earnings. Mining was no ordinary job. In the 1980s about 600 miners died every year, and the experience of hazard and death affected and drew together all miners and their union. James Motlatsi was trapped by a rock fall deep underground in a gold mine, and it took other miners over an hour to dig him out; three weeks later he was back at the same job: “When you work in the mining industry, you will end it like a soldier. If someone is trapped and killed you just take him out and continue with the same job.”

Motlatsi seems to have been representative of his class and times. He had entered the mines at age 19 in 1970, travelling from his village in Lesotho, working his way up the ladder of mining jobs, from “lasher”, cleaning drains underground, to “box attendant”, hauling rock away from the work-face, to “timber boy”, building the packs of material that supported the mine ceiling, then as a machine operator drilling rock. Four years had brought him a wage of just 82 cents a shift. He went on as a winch driver, team leader and a position in the personnel department. The latter was safe but corrupt—bribes, he found, were often taken from job-seekers--and the job “he hated most”.

In 1982, he read of moves to establish a mineworkers union, and a friend put him in touch with Cyril Ramaphosa, a young lawyer in Soweto.³⁷ Together they formed a seven-person planning committee, and within weeks recruited 18,000 members. Three months after their first meeting, a congress of 1,800 workers elected Motlatsi the first president of the NUM, Elijah Barayi from Cradock as vice-president, and Ramaphosa as secretary general, then the only full-time official. The latter, according to Butler, immediately sought links with wealthy unions in Scandinavia, Britain and the United State, while he and Motlatsi together built up the union’s organisational strengths. By the mid-1980s, the

he found “a total embrace of my commitment” and that “non-racialism was the social fibre woven into the fibre of the movement.” Jay Naidoo, *Fighting for Justice: A Lifetime of Political and Social Activism*, Johannesburg, Picador Africa, 2010, p. 100.

³⁷ Ramaphosa was born in Johannesburg in 1952; his legal studies at the University of the North were cut short by eleven months in solitary confinement. He gained knowledge of project, financial and strategic management through the Urban Foundation, and he built a wide range of contacts in business and politics. At their first meeting, Motlatsi “could see he was even younger than me—although he spoke very well. He seemed nothing special.” Anthony Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa*, Johannesburg and Oxford, Jacana and James Currey, 2007, pp. 105-06 and 141.

NUM was a huge organisation, with a "multimillion dollar" annual budget, and nearly 300,000 dues-paying members, "bringing substantial internal funding to the union."³⁸

But the NUM's real strength derived from the nature and importance of mining: as Marcel Golding, a journalist at the Union, wrote at the time, "the life of a miner is terrible": he awakes around 2am to prepare to go on shift at 4am. He works "for eight hours in an eighty-two-centimetre hole in a crouched position with rock above your head that can cave in at any moment. Around you is heat at an unbearable temperature and noise like the sound of a drill." He works under a white miner who shouts abuse, and at the end of the day, goes back to living conditions miserable almost beyond belief, a concrete cubicle in a hostel room 18 feet by 25 feet shared by twenty men.

In sum, miners worked in a terrifying environment, under the constant threat of arbitrary dismissal, and they were "paid a pittance".³⁹

The NUM, says Mufson, "radically altered" such labour relations "by suggesting that miners no longer act as willing participants in their own exploitation". Like Black Consciousness among students, trade unionism "fomented a revolution in the minds of workers." Their assertive mood was present at the NUM's fifth congress in February 1987, when the union bussed shop stewards from all over the country to a hall in Soweto. Huge banners hung from the ceiling, one with the words "Socialism Means Freedom," another "Organise or Starve."

Their anger and determination was evident in the three-week walkout by the 300,000 NUM members at almost the same time. It was the biggest strike in the country's history, and it revealed the effectiveness of union organisation that, against big handicaps, commanded the loyalty of a work-force unafraid to voice its demands.⁴⁰

The action was preceded by months of negotiations. The union demanded an average wage increase of 55 per cent, to meet an inflation rate of some 17 per cent and to narrow the gap between white and black miners, then cut their demands to 40 and then 30 per cent as deadlines neared. The Chamber of Mines, representing the companies, offered increases between 16 and 23 per cent depending on job categories. Anglo American, the largest mining house, whose workers represented 70 per cent of the NUM's membership, offered more money. But for three weeks the miners stayed out, displaying a determination exceeding their leaders' expectations. In late August, Anglo fired 45,000 workers including Motlatsi, while other companies sacked another 15,000. Two days later, the NUM accepted an offer it had previously rejected. "We made a tactical retreat. It was better than starting from scratch", said Motlatsi.⁴¹

³⁸ Mufson, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-45 and Butler, *op.cit.*, pp. 143-46.

³⁹ Quoted in Mufson, *op. cit.*, p. 148, comment from Butler, *op.cit.*, 147-48.

⁴⁰ Mufson, *op.cit.*, pp. 148-9.

⁴¹ At the centre of the NUM negotiating team, says Butler, was the special double-act between Ramaphosa and Motlatsi, the former controlling the relations with the mining companies and

The costs were high. Eight miners were killed by police and security guards, 500 injured and 400 arrested. Although only 20 per cent of unionists were in fact fired, 70 per cent of shop stewards were lost. But during the strike some 50,000 miners applied to join the NUM, and despite the inadequate settlement, an impressive show of trade union force had been made. Bobby Godsell of Anglo American allowed that "the NUM showed it can take guys out for a long time." Labour laws demanded a protracted bargaining process which had allowed the companies time to stockpile gold and coal and make contingency plans. But, aside from the police shootings, the state had not intervened throughout the three weeks. Godsell paid further respect to the miners and the union, and their key role in democratisation: "Labour relations are a little patch of post-apartheid South Africa, because it is where blacks have some real power...Our relationships with unions are based on an acceptance of common dignity, because we recognise the black worker's *power*." They had in fact bargained terms of employment with the most powerful corporate chiefs in South Africa,⁴² and in so doing advanced democratisation further.

The trade union movement strived to achieve its ideal of democratisation both in general and in its organisational detail. Mufson believes that the idea of the mandate began with the trade unions and spilled over into other organisations. The equally important principle of leadership accountability and recall, had seen community groups learning from FOSATU. In some townships, union shop stewards played important roles in community groups. If the commitment to workers' control was initially sometimes a show, to the rank and file it was real. Union leaders ignored it at their peril. The old FOSATU unions and the NUM, he states, maintained strong worker-education programmes for the rank and file. The president of every union was required to be a full-time worker. The NUM's full-time professionals, such as Ramaphosa and Golding (as a negotiator) earned the same amount as top mineworkers: \$500 to \$700 a month. The relationship between ordinary workers and their domestic political leaders altered qualitatively through the 1970s and 1980s: earlier, organizers had to coax workers to join unions, but in the latter period workers "displayed boundless enthusiasm and expectations".⁴³ Trade union membership continued to grow strongly in size.⁴⁴ South Africa's union density figures of some 59 per cent was one of the highest in the world.

the latter the domestic situation, gauging the likely reactions of the membership to the concessions the former was making or extracting, and agitating or soothing by turn the NUM's representatives. *Op.cit.*, pp. 153-4.

⁴² Mufson, *op.cit.*, pp. 149-54. Godsell's emphasis.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 155. A point made in memorable terms by Friedman, *Building Tomorrow Today*.

⁴⁴ Membership figures are rounded up. Webster and Adler, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

Year	TU membership	Density (%)
1989	2,130,000	39.9
1990	2,459,000	46.3
1991	2,719,000	52.3
1992	2,906,000	57.1
1993	2,890,000	59

The ANC, armed struggle and the subordination of the people

The underground South African Communist Party (SACP) resolved in August 1960 to create an armed force. The move was, according to Barrell, a joint venture of some ANC leaders and the SACP, and they moved very much from the top down, chiefly in abstract and theoretical terms rather than close regard for the practical social and political realities. At the top of the high command was Nelson Mandela, and around him were Joe Slovo, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni, and very soon Joe Modise. In 1963, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) outlined its intended strategy: guerrilla struggle would be initiated by groups of fighters being infiltrated into rural areas (some 300 recruits had supposedly already been sent abroad for training), where they would be joined by thousands of auxiliaries recruited internally. These rural groups would attack state targets, complemented by urban sabotage and what was called political agitation. Only minimal efforts were made, however, to organise among the peasantry, and the role accorded to the urban working-class was simply to supply MK recruits under SACP auspices.

The capture of the bulk of MK's high command in July 1963, however, smashed MK inside South Africa and destroyed much of the ANC, leaving a remnant in exile and prison. The ANC thereafter saw armed struggle as the means to rebuild its internal political presence and challenge apartheid. By 1965, there were some 800 MK guerrilla trainees chiefly in Tanzania, the Soviet Union and, before the Sino-Soviet split, in China. Modise was MK commander, following the capture of his three predecessors. For the ANC and SACP, MK was supposed to "revive the spirit of revolt" at home but, as Barrell puts it, exile "created a special set of problems." The frequently urban lifestyles of the exiled party leadership, in say London and New York, and the harsh conditions faced by the cadres in remote rural camps, differed considerably, and grievances among the latter were ignored or suppressed. At times, a gulf opened up between the ANC leadership and the MK rank and file.⁴⁵ But the depths of this gulf, and how badly

⁴⁵ Howard Barrell, *MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, ch. 1 and pp. 18-22.

the elite responded to the needs and values of the soldiery, has only recently begun to be properly considered.⁴⁶

Yet there were some early signals of forthcoming strategic and leadership problems. MK's hopes of building a supposed "Ho Chi Minh trail" to South Africa via Rhodesia—attempted, for example, in the Wankie Campaign in August 1967—was an early indication of the gross inadequacies of planning and the detachment of the top commanders from the soldiers; the Luthuli Detachment did not have enough weapons or men, maps were out of date and knowledge of the terrain was inadequate, even their food was short. Under constant attack from superior Rhodesian and South African forces, such inadequacies forced Chris Hani and other members of the Detachment to retreat into Botswana, where they were imprisoned for up to two years.

When they returned to Lusaka, however, Hani found that the leadership did not seek to learn from their experiences or even to debrief them. He therefore put his name on a memorandum which accused the ANC of cynicism and indifference, and Modise, specifically, of authoritarianism and arbitrariness, creating a culture of sycophancy in MK. His interests were greatest, they said, in his Zambian commercial enterprises. A military tribunal in Livingstone voted for the execution of the signatories, but the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) decided on their suspension. Hani's biographers note his sense of betrayal at this exclusion. The party's conference at Morogoro in Tanzania in 1969 was, according to Barrell, "a very angry assembly of men and women" who had lost confidence in many members of the NEC, opening a dangerous chasm between leadership and rank and file. But Hani himself had growing stature, and he was elected to the SACP's central committee the following year.⁴⁷

The 1976 Soweto uprising, Barrell states, "caught the ANC unprepared", unable to offer protective military activity, national political guidance, or even such basic necessities as food and clothing.⁴⁸ Over two years, some 3,000 to 4,000 students went into MK abroad.⁴⁹ The experiences of MK recruits in the 1980s, especially in Angola, at the hands of their commanders, were a travesty of their ideals and expectations.

Joe Modise was born in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, on 23 May 1929. He joined the ANC Youth League in his early twenties, and participated in resistance to forced removals in Sophiatown and in various criminal activities noted below. When the ANC was banned, openings quickly came and were

⁴⁶ It was later officially claimed that senior ANC leaders "trained and lived in the camps with the recruits", but no details or evidence were provided in support of this assertion. ANC, "Statement to the [TRC]", 19 August 1996, p. 87.

⁴⁷ Janet Smith and Beauregard Tromp, *Hani: A Life Too Short*, Johannesburg and Cape Town, Jonathan Ball, 2009, pp. 93-105 and 110-125 and Barrell, *op.cit.*, pp. 23 and 26.

⁴⁸ The latter was flown in from the Soviet Union to Angola. Irina Filatova, "The ANC and the Soviets", *Politics Web Online*, 10 August 2011.

⁴⁹ Barrell, *op.cit.*, pp. 31-33. The higher estimate is Hyslop, *op.cit.*, p. 187 and the lower Barrell.

retained seemingly without regard for his performance. He was appointed to the MK high command in 1961 and became commander in 1965, and around 1963 he began to conduct operations from abroad while undergoing military training at much the same time in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

From the early 1960s until formal negotiations began with Pretoria three decades later, MK appears to have been effectively under Modise's control.⁵⁰ Over that period, as a commentator has phrased it, "it is hard to find a significant MK success for which Modise could claim credit." MK's soldiers were consistently ill-prepared and under resourced, and the main charges against the commander from within Umkhonto were "inertia" and a "lack of concern for MK troopers." Unlike Chris Hani, he was known to be "never in the camps", as he devoted prime time to his business interests in Lusaka and elsewhere. "I never heard a good word about him", one ANC exile said in the 1980s, while another was at a loss to explain his enduring power and seniority within the armed struggle.⁵¹ It will be argued below that Modise not only retained but magnified his negative characteristics—his militarism, greed, irresponsibility in office--during the transition to majority rule and throughout his time as Nelson Mandela's Defence Minister.

When the TRC made its investigations into the liberation movements from 1960 to 1990, it recognised that the ANC was an internationally recognised body conducting a legitimate struggle against the apartheid state. Nonetheless it made the vital distinction between a "just war" and "just means", and it went ahead to find that the ANC, and its organs like the National Executive Committee (NEC) and MK, "committed gross violations of human rights in the course of their political activities and armed struggles, acts for which they are morally and politically accountable."⁵²

For brevity's sake, and in an endeavour to do justice to available material and the people concerned, only certain incidents will be concentrated on here: the mutinies among MK members in Angola around 1984; the abuse and killing of some 16 young men and women at the hands of Winnie Mandela in Soweto in the late 1980s; the killing of MK commander Thami Zulu in Lusaka in November 1989; and Operation Vula (from *vulindlela*, or "open the road") circa 1988-1990. These different events occurred in proximate sequence, and all were characterised by decision-making by aloof, arrogant political elites and the extreme subordination of ordinary people, as rank-and-file, vulnerable youth or loyal members, and the friends and relatives of those victims. Much is now known about these terrible occurrences but much remains hidden chiefly by the now ruling elites. Collectively they throw light on how and why the democratisation movement was caused to fail 1988-94.

⁵⁰ Linda Ensor, "Controversial Leader was at Forefront of Liberation Struggle", *Business Day*, 28 November 2011. Enlarged upon below.

⁵¹ Drew Forrest, "A Man With an Ambiguous Past", *Mail and Guardian*, 6 December 2001.

⁵² TRC *Final Report*, vol 2, ch 4, p. 325.

MK and the betrayal of the “Soweto generation”

The issues in the mutinies among MK soldiers in Angola in 1984, according to Trehwela, were an end to involvement in counter-insurgency warfare against UNITA (the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) forces, their redeployment to South Africa, and the immediate suspension of the activities of the ANC's security apparatus, known variously as National Security (NAT) and *Mbokodo* (the grindstone / the stone that crushes). The soldiers levelled their strongest criticism against three NEC members, all directly involved in MK. They held Joe Modise most responsible for MK's failure to engage effectively with Pretoria; secondly, Mzwandile (or Mzwai) Piliso, the chief of Mbokodo,⁵³ responsible in their eyes for the suppression of dissent and democracy in the ANC; and thirdly, Andrew Masondo, previously jailed on Robben Island, who had joined the ANC leadership in exile after 1976, where he allegedly abused young women, and was a key figure in the running of the prison camp called Quatro (camp 32). The mutiny had been brewing in various MK camps in Angola since the late 1970s, and its mainspring was “the suppression of democracy by the ANC leadership.”⁵⁴

After a series of mass meetings and discussions with figures like Hani—who sided firmly with the loyalists—a Committee of Ten drew up their demands which concentrated on the suspension of Mbokodo and an investigation into affairs at Quatro; and the convening of a fully representative democratic conference to review the development of the struggle, prepare new strategies and hold elections for the NEC. The committee was chaired by Zaba Maledza (his MK name), a former Black Consciousness activist in SASO who had subsequently served prominently on the ANC's radio programmes, and at least two of its members were women.

The mutineers were ruthlessly crushed. Some were executed by firing squad, a group of about 15 who tried to escape were beaten and shot in the bush. Another group were kept naked and tied with ropes for three weeks at the prison in Pango, until Gertrude Shope, the visiting head of the ANC's Women's Section, was said to have ordered an end to the tortures and executions. Zaba Maledza died in an isolation cell in Quatro.⁵⁵

The hearings of the TRC deepened understanding of these events. Discipline and security were initially handled by MK command structures, headed as noted from 1965 by Modise. Mbokodo was established in the mid-1970s,⁵⁶ and it was

⁵³ Officially described as “the most senior leader in charge of all camps in Angola”, appointed head of NAT in 1981. ANC, “Further Submissions and Responses by the ANC to Questions Raised by the [TRC]”, 12 May 1997, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Paul Trehwela, *Inside Quatro*, Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2009, pp. 8-11. The book is largely a compilation of essays first published in 1990.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-29.

⁵⁶ Elsewhere the ANC said that it set up a “fully-fledged Security Department in 1969” tasked with the physical protection of ANC resources and the screening of new recruits. ANC, “Statement to the [TRC]”, 19 August 1996, p. 105.

responsible for many of the violations of human rights carried out by the ANC in exile. Significant violations took place at Quatro and others occurred elsewhere in Angola, at ANC headquarters in Lusaka, in Botswana and in Tanzania and Uganda.

The TRC noted the bitterness felt by those who were loyal to the ANC and the causes it represented and who felt betrayed by the ANC's failure to deal openly with the abuses. Joe Seremane's brother, Timothy Seremane (aka Kenneth Mahamba), was executed in Quatro, and he testified in July 1997: "I want somebody to come and tell me what my younger brother actually did that he deserved to be shot like an animal being put down after being brutally disfigured so that his best friends could not recognise him... suddenly nobody has ever known him, suddenly nobody has a record to show what kind of trial he had..."⁵⁷

The Commission heard that a supposed spy scare in the ANC in 1981 had led to paranoia about infiltration by apartheid agents, and in this context a number of MK members were detained and tortured; some died as a result, while a few were executed; Mbokodo claimed credit before the TRC for uncovering spies in 1981. Barely two years later, a rebellion among MK soldiers in Angola—the *Mkatashinga* mutiny of 1984—led to further violations. Mutineers at Viana camp were persuaded to end their protests by Chris Hani.⁵⁸ The leaders were then detained; 32 were imprisoned in Luanda where two died between February and July that year. Three months after Viana, there was a further mutiny at Pango, crushed by loyalist MK members assisted by Angolan troops. Some were allegedly tortured, seven were executed, and the rest were transferred to Quatro, before Shope intervened. But some were held for years without trial, and the Commission received statements from detainees who were tortured and assaulted between 1986 and 1991.

The Skweyiya Commission of Inquiry, reporting to ANC president Nelson Mandela in August 1992, heard that detainees were held for three to seven years without trial, some in solitary confinement, in overcrowded unhygienic cells, where food deprivation was used as a punishment. They also found that maltreatment at Quatro was persistent and brutal. Before internment, torture was used to extract confessions. According to the TRC, the Skweyiya report contained a confidential list of Mbokodo members believed responsible for the violations.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *Final Report*, vol 2, ch. 4, pp. 347-8.

⁵⁸ Hani's biographers say that he was army commissar in 1985 and chief of staff some three years later, so "charged with life and death." They also claim that he "never quite recovered from Pango and the events thereafter", and quote him saying with perhaps characteristic ambivalence: "I thought we should not use torture or beatings against those we thought were our enemies. I annoyed a lot of people in the NEC, but I was not the only one speaking out... But I think I was the most consistent because I had seen it myself, I'd been to Quatro." Smith and Tromp, *op.cit.*, pp. 153 and 187.

⁵⁹ *Final Report*, vol 2, ch 4, pp. 349-50. The Chair of the Skweyiya Commission was Advocate Thembile Louis Skweyiya, SC, assisted by Ms B. Mabandla and Advocate G.J. Marcus. Both the

The Motsuenyane Commission was appointed by Mandela in 1993 with broader terms of reference.⁶⁰ It held public hearings, and among those it heard were eleven alleged perpetrators. It concluded, in August 1993, that while victims of abuses have been heard and catalogued, “they have not yet received the full measure of justice due them [sic].”⁶¹

Before what was termed a “recall hearing” of the TRC on 12 May 1997, the ANC acknowledged that a code of conduct was only introduced in 1985, and before then the tribunals which sentenced people to death were *ad hoc* and did not allow the accused any form of legal representation.

A number of official listings in 1996-97 offered rough and approximate statements of deaths suffered and perpetrated by the ANC. An appendix to the ANC’s Final Submission contained the names of some 900 people who died in exile, but it said that the list was not entirely accurate. The TRC commented that many deponents who had relatives missing in exile could be accounted for in this listing.⁶² The Commission also noted that Piliso admitted to the Skweyiya tribunal that he had ordered the beating of suspected agents in 1981 in order to obtain information, as he said, “at any cost.” Mac Maharaj, senior ANC figure, observed that “we made no provision for legal defence of the accused in 1981 and 1982.”⁶³

The ANC also submitted, as a further Confidential Appendix, a list of MK members who died violently, they said, “after committing breaches of discipline”; included here were 22 names under the heading “Agents executed on order of tribunals.” The name Timothy Seremane (aka Mahamba), already noted, was here.⁶⁴ The August 1996 Statement supposedly provided the names of all ANC members who died in exile between March 1960 and December 1993. Some of the numbers and the categories of their deaths read strangely. While the total of deaths from “natural causes”, world-wide over 33 years, was 379, those who “died at the hands of the enemy” totalled only 231, plus an additional 99 who were killed as a result of “UNITA ambushes”—330 deaths in battle over three decades is no tribute to the combativeness of MK, while 99 killed by UNITA is an implicit recognition of the scale of the fighting which MK cadres had denounced as wasteful and diversionary. Deaths in Angola also included a category of “Accidents” (other than in Training or in Motor Vehicles) numbering

Chair and Ms Mabandla were ANC members. “Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into Complaints by Former [ANC] Prisoners and Detainees”, 1992, pp. 1, 3 and 19.

⁶⁰ Proceedings before Skweyiya were not open to the public or press, and they were dependent on the willingness of witnesses to come forward—in their own words, this was “their greatest shortcoming”, since many ex-prisoners remained fearful of their safety. “Report”, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Final Report*, vol 2, ch 4, pp. 351-52.

⁶² *Final Report*, vol 2, ch 4, p. 352,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 354-55.

⁶⁴ According to the ANC, Mahamba was camp commander at Pango where, in 1981, he beat a cadre, Ndunga, to death; the commander had allegedly been an agent of Pretoria since 1976. “Statement to the [TRC]”, 19 August 1996, p. 108.

27, while that of "Suicides" in Angola totalled 41, by far the largest such number world-wide—the next largest number of suicides were in Zambia, only six; implied testimony to the extreme traumas of the Angolan camps. Those "Executed by Order of Our Military Tribunal" in Angola totalled 34. This list too was officially described as "not complete",⁶⁵ as it rather obviously was.

Andrew Masondo, political commissar of MK at this time, told the TRC that he was a member of a review committee that sentenced Gabriel Moshoeu to death. This victim appeared rather typical of those swept up in the "spy scare". Masondo stated that they had information that Moshoeu "joined the enemy" while in combat with MK in Rhodesia. He had disappeared in the course of battle, and later reappeared. In Masondo's words: "They investigate, they find out that he had had contact with the enemy...When he got to Angola he was court martialled and sentenced to death."⁶⁶

Gabriel Mthembu, described as camp commander, testified that Gabriel Moshoeu was tried by an *ad hoc* tribunal comprised of Joe Modise, Andrew Masondo and Mzwai Piliso, and admitted that "he might have been beaten in the process of investigation when people were trying to get him to confess given the overwhelming nature of evidence against him."⁶⁷

The TRC heard that a second mutiny occurred on 13 May 1984 at Pango where some seven MK personnel were killed in fighting by the mutineers. On 18 May, those described as loyal ANC members recaptured the camp killing eight named individuals in the process; another was said to have "committed suicide with a pistol" and another died because "he refused treatment [for malaria]." Another seven named men were said to have been executed following an investigation, and a further nine were sentenced to death, though the number of these who were killed is uncertain.⁶⁸

The ANC's own summarised account of these events is as follows: since 1979, Quatro was its "formal detention centre." In 1981, a "rash of bizarre incidents of indiscipline" occurred. Protests followed in late 1983 and early the next year which were defused with no loss of life. There was also a mutiny at Viana transit camp which was put down with the death of two mutineers. A "far more serious mutiny" at Pango in 1984 was "suppressed mercilessly", and seven cadres were sentenced to death.⁶⁹

Torture directly involved top people in MK and Mbokodo, and its use was not restricted to the first spy scare period. At the "recall hearing", the ANC acknowledged the use of torture. Before Skweyiya, Piliso said that he had taken

⁶⁵ "Statement" 19 August 1996, pp. 137-64.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

⁶⁹ It said that each camp contained a minimum of 1,200 cadres, and that food in the camps and qualified medical attention was extremely inadequate. "Statement", 19 August 1996, pp. 108-111.

part in the beating of suspects in 1981, when MK personnel were interrogated over some two weeks. They were beaten on the soles of their feet in Piliso's presence. Among victim statements presented to the Commission were the following. Diliza Mthembu was one of the "Soweto generation" who had left to join the ANC in 1976. Detained for over four years at Quatro and at Viana, he was given electric shocks, suffocated with gas masks and beaten all over his body with sticks; Gordon Moshoeu was also detained for four years. Among the abuses he endured at Quatro was having wild chillies smeared, he testified, "on his private parts and anus"; Kenneth Sigam had melted plastic poured on his back, and he was hit on the head with a steel rod. After six years at Quatro, he was held in Tanzania, eight months of which were in solitary confinement, and not released until 1991; Ronnie Masango had disagreed with the decision to deploy MK against UNITA, and was detained for fourteen months in Luanda, where he was beaten and kicked all over his body; Daliwonga Mandela was held at the ANC so-called "Green House" in Lusaka, tortured daily for six months, and threatened with death, he claimed, not only by Modise, but also by Alfred Nzo, Steve Tshwete and Jacob Zuma, all senior figures in the ANC then and later; and Ms Ntombentsha Makanda, detained in Lusaka in 1980 and 1985, when she was kicked and punched with her hands tied behind her back, and sexually abused.⁷⁰

The TRC concluded on the evidence presented to them that torture was routinely used by Mbokodo from 1979 to 1989. They noted that members of MK selected for intelligence were trained in the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Gabriel Mthembu, for example, had trained in counter-intelligence, including the thorough screening and assessment of new recruits, and he claimed that the standard of training in the GDR was high.⁷¹

Official opinion and some facts presented at the Recall Hearing in May 1997 merit attention. The ANC asserted that "no systematic or widespread" abuse had occurred, and rejected with contempt the suggestion that any cadre was trained specifically in torture. It claimed that some of those involved in the 1984 mutinies had long histories of destructive behaviour, and some also had—as the Stuart Commission had revealingly phrased it—"illusions of power and leadership."⁷² It allowed, again following Stuart, that "nearly all petty offences [in the camps] had been dealt with in a destructive manner" since 1979. Following the Kabwe Conference, at which 40 per cent of the delegates were supposedly from the camps, Piliso was "removed" as head of NAT and Andrew Masondo was "censured by the leadership". It also allowed that "most of the excesses" took place between 1981 and 1985, but reiterated that "no 'extra-legal

⁷⁰ Skweyiya presented three detailed examples of the use of torture to extract confessions, and they noted what they called "staggering brutality" at Quatro, where "violence for the sake of violence" prevailed. *Report*, pp. 11 and 14.

⁷¹ *Final Report*, vol 2, ch 4, pp. 361-66.

⁷² The Stuart Commission comprised Hermanus Loos ("James Stuart"), Aziz Pahad, Sizakele Sigxashe and Mtu Jwili, and the latter two became heads of directorates in a restructured NAT. It reported to the NEC in March 1984.

executions' were carried out in areas where the ANC leadership had control". Quoting further findings of the Stuart Commission, it admitted that the conditions in its camps were dreadful: "the total isolation from the outside world, the desperation and frustration of not being deployed, ma[d]e it practically impossible for cadres to survive (politically, morally and psychologically) in the camps for several years." But in answer to a specific question from the TRC, it confirmed that Piliso and Masonde indeed "retained senior posts in the post-1994 administration": "to continue punishing these officials endlessly would be contrary to humane practice".⁷³ Piliso's responsibilities for the gross abuse of cadres would appear to rank second only to those of Joe Modise.

Despite the weight of evidence, the ANC at the end of the 1990s, did its best to avoid accountability. Party president, Thabo Mbeki, took the TRC in late 1998 to court to prevent the release of its Final Report, but the High Court of the Western Cape ruled that the Commission had adequately considered the ANC's responses to its findings. State President Mandela appeared to agree partially with his party comrades when he received the Report, as he observed, "with all its imperfections". Bishop Desmond Tutu expressed his "devastation" at Mbeki's action, and the Commission noted that a "great deal of acrimony" was created between itself and the ANC by the attempted interdiction. Nonetheless, in a statement to a special sitting of parliament convened to discuss the Report, Mbeki, as deputy state president, reiterated his complaints.⁷⁴

In a section entitled "Holding the ANC Accountable", the TRC endeavoured to clarify its position after the handing over of the Final Report. They rather overgenerously declared that, while the ANC "at a leadership level made frank disclosures, the same cannot be said for the welfare desk": in more than 250 instances, where the Commission tried to verify information supplied by victims and their families, they were "unable to obtain any response" from the party.

The TRC reconfirmed its findings: under international law, "the fact that persons died in custody at the hands of the ANC places responsibility for their deaths on the ANC." Chiefly two categories of people had suffered at the hands of the ANC and its military/security structures: suspected "enemy agents" and "mutineers". People were routinely tortured, charged and convicted by tribunals, without due process, sentenced and executed. The subsequent failure of the ANC to communicate properly with the families of victims "constituted callous and insensitive conduct." The forms of torture detailed by the Motsuenyane commission involved the deliberate infliction of pain, severe ill-treatment in prison and solitary confinement, and the deliberate withholding of food, water and medical care.⁷⁵ These practices amounted to gross violations of human

⁷³ ANC, "Further Submission and Responses", pp. 12-14, 16 and 17, and 19-21.

⁷⁴ Good, *The Liberal Model and Africa*, pp. 128-9 and *Final Report*, vol 6, ch 3, p. 643.

⁷⁵ The findings in the three reports, the TRC, Motsuenyane and Skweyiya are cumulative and, particularly in the latter case, the detail is sometimes important. The denial of food at Quatro was not only systemic but "unconscionable and pernicious". While the diet of detainees was chiefly "diluted tomato puree and rice", the camp had adequate quantities of tropical fruit which

rights. Motsuenyane also found that "adequate steps were not taken in good time against those responsible for such violations." Thus: "The information that the Commission received subsequent to the submission of its five-volume Final Report has confirmed that the Commission was correct in making the findings that it did."⁷⁶

But on the TRC's own evidence, as well as on other analytical and biographical material, the ANC and MK leadership had shown no accountability to its own members, most culpably to the youth who joined its ranks after June 1976, whose supposed mutinies resulted from their leaders' refusal to heed their justified complaints. There was little accountability either to the uninformed and grieving relatives of the victims, and to the South African people. A leader like Joe Modise, criticised in detail by both Hani and the mutineers, persisted in his derelict and corrupt conduct over three decades, and then gained, as did others, high ministerial office. The TRC was overly helpful to the ANC in allowing the admission of lists of named violators as confidential appendices, beyond the reach again of relatives and an uninformed public. And Mbeki was prepared to take extraordinary eleventh hour measures to try to suppress one of the best available insights into what the ANC's armed struggle actually represented. Whatever "imperfections" the Report contained, one not inconsiderable failure was its inability to discern the reality of the origins and role of the UDF; the TRC simply assuming without supporting evidence that the ANC "played a direct role" in their establishment,⁷⁷ undermining their autonomy and obscuring the democratisation that most characterised them and South African domestic politics of the 1980s.⁷⁸

Skweyiya had been firmer on both the issues of elite accountability and assistance to the victims. They strongly recommended "urgent and immediate attention be given to identifying and dealing with those responsible for the maltreatment of detainees." Those who were detained without trial "should have the allegations against them unequivocally and unconditionally withdrawn", and "a clear and unequivocal apology" given to them. All who were detained in ANC camps should receive monetary compensation. Since it was clear that "many people" suffered in the camps, an independent body should be established to document the abuses.⁷⁹

grew freely in the vicinity, out of bounds to detainees. Additionally, the camp commanders had a plentiful supply of food, which included specially supplied tinned products; "Any food left over after the commanders had their fill was fed to the pigs." *Report*, p. 10.

⁷⁶ *Final Report*, vol 6, ch 3, pp. 658-61. The Final Report ultimately comprised seven volumes.

⁷⁷ *Final Report*, vol 2, ch 4, p. 340.

⁷⁸ Allegations of biases and organizational weaknesses in the TRC are strong. There was, for example, a large pro-ANC majority among the 17 Commissioners while there were none who were identified either with Inkatha or the then Democratic Party. The TRC's vital research unit was neither well qualified nor experienced. Johnson, *op.cit.*, pp. 273-75.

⁷⁹ *Report*, p. 19.

Instead, the ANC endeavoured to enforce secrecy and non-accountability. As they left Quatro, both prior to 1988 and during the evacuation from Angola, surviving prisoners were “threatened with death if they ever were to relate to anyone the events that had transpired during their internment.”⁸⁰ When the first group of 32 ex-detainees arrived in South Africa in August 1991, they were publicly labelled by the ANC as “the most notorious” suspected agents, though they had never been tried or found guilty of an offence, and the party endeavoured to impose a “moratorium on accusative statements” upon them. They and others like them experienced, according to Skweyiya, a double punishment; lengthy imprisonment without trial for unproven crimes and “ostracism upon their release”⁸¹

The Crimes and Immunity of Madikizela-Mandela

With Nelson Mandela in prison and other leaders in exile, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela assumed, says her biographer, that the leadership role was automatically hers: “I was ready to deputise for Nelson”, she allegedly wrote. In her semi-official role as wife of the ANC leader, and as her reputation as an opponent of apartheid spread, she became regarded internationally as *de facto* First Lady, as her association with Danielle Mitterand of France and Lisbeth Palme of Sweden appeared to suggest. In 1986, with her return to Soweto from harsh banishment conditions in Brandfort in the Free State, she acted, according to the TRC, “as an operative” of MK, supposedly providing assistance to cadres infiltrating into the country, and appearing publicly in military uniform. Trehwela notes the “extraordinary status” she acquired, and sees its substance in her role “as oracle to the unseen leader on Robben Island.” But in Soweto in the late 1980s, her actual following was composed chiefly of homeless children.⁸²

She had received for some time financial support from foreign sources—one cheque, for instance, from a UN anti-apartheid committee, was apparently for \$100,000—some of which may have gone into the building of a 15-room mansion in Orlando West (aka “Winnie’s Palace”). In 1986-87 this became home to the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC), which she founded. Fear and intimidation radiated from this gang and their creator. On 28 July 1988, the house was burnt down by high school pupils, while residents watched in silence. But terrorism continued out of her new residence in Diepkloof,⁸³ as the fate of

⁸⁰ Todd Cleveland, “We Still Want the Truth”, paper first presented to the African Studies Association, Washington, DC, December 2002, Trehwela, *op.cit.*, frontispiece.

⁸¹ *Report*, p. 9.

⁸² Gilbey, *op.cit.*, pp. 68, 133-34 and photographs; TRC *Final Report*, vol 2 ch 6, p. 555, and Trehwela, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-47. Chris Hani’s contribution to the promotion of Madikizela-Mandela’s pseudo- revolutionary image in 1990 is noted below under Operation Vula.

⁸³ Intimidation reigned inside and outside her residence. According to Gift Ntombeni, a follower, gang members manned her gates at all time, recording complaints, and hunting down and assaulting culprits. Members “would not even dare” defy Madikizela-Mandela: “if you did, you

four abducted youths, Lolo Sono, Stompie Seipei, Pelo Mekgwe and Thabiso Mono, acquired publicity in early 1989. Dr Abu-Baker Asvat was shot dead in his surgery on 27 January and soon after the body of Seipei was identified.⁸⁴ These killings were flagrant and interconnected but only two, it emerged, among other barbarities. Asvat had been summoned to examine the boy on 1 January, after he had undergone a prolonged period of "Break Down" in Madikizela-Mandela's hands—the victim was repeatedly thrown into the air and allowed to fall to the floor—and the physician pronounced him brain damaged and in dire need of hospitalisation; she and her accomplices decided instead to dispose of Seipei.⁸⁵

With the police barely active, the leadership of the democracy movement spoke out on 16 February; it was the prime example of the UDF's unflinching criticism of elites. Flanked by COSATU president, Elijah Barayi, and by UDF co-president Richard Gumede, Murphy Morobe of the MDM-UDF, read a public statement directly linking Madikizela-Mandela to Seipei's killing, and affirmed that the football team and "the reign of terror" which it carried out was "her creation." He went on: "We are outraged...and not prepared to remain silent when those who are violating human rights claim to be doing so in the name of the struggle." The MDM therefore "distance[d] itself from Mrs Mandela and her actions."⁸⁶

The TRC held a Special Investigation into the MUFC, restricted to a seven-month period between August 1988 and the end of February 1989 (however the Commission noted some cases outside this period). They found that "the residents and associates of the Mandela household, including Ms Madikizela-Mandela herself, were implicated directly or indirectly in... assaults and abduction, and the murder and attempted murder of at least a dozen individuals." The investigations involved public hearings in late 1998, which included testimony from Morobe, Cachalia and Madikizela-Mandela. Former security police were interviewed. The public hearings were, however, constrained by time limitations which restricted cross-examinations.

Among the assaults were the following. The torture and mutilation of Peter Makhanda and Phillip Makhanda; on 26 May 1987, the brothers were taken by force to the back rooms of the Mandela home, where they were assaulted and

were branded an informer." Her house was known as "Parliament", people were assaulted in the "Fish Oil Room", and a shack where abducted boys were kept was called "Lusaka". Bodies were often left lying near the jacuzzi, and the bedroom of her daughter, Zinzi Mandela-Hlongwane, was used for pleasure and for stashing guns. Both Zinzi and her mother, he said, were "capable of anything". She closely associated with the police, shoot-outs sometimes flagrantly occurred, yet Madikizela-Mandela was never questioned or charged. Good, *The Liberal Model*, p.117.

⁸⁴ Stompie was aged around 13, and two years earlier had been the youngest detainee in the country. He was self-taught, could recite the Freedom Charter in its entirety, and liked to carry a briefcase in emulation of his hero, Allan Boesak. Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

⁸⁵ Good, *The Liberal Model*, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁶ Good, *The Liberal Model*, pp. 98-99. Morobe's statement was dubbed "unprecedented public criticism" by the TRC, *Final Report*, vol 2, ch 6, p. 556.

had ANC slogans carved into their bodies by MUFC members, the wounds exacerbated with battery acid. Ms Phumlile Dlamini was assaulted by Madikizela-Mandela and MUFC members in late 1988. The TRC determined that she was taken from her house on more than one occasion and that Madikizela-Mandela and her followers were responsible for the assaults.

The abduction and killing of Lolo Sono and Anthony Tshabalala: Nicodemus Sono, the father of Lolo, testified that on 13 November 1988, Madikizela-Mandela and her driver came to his house, and he saw Lolo sitting in the back of her vehicle, his face swollen and bruised. Madikizela-Mandela told him that Lolo was a police spy, and that an MK cadre had been killed because of him. Despite Sono's pleas for his son's release, Madikizela-Mandela declared: "I am taking this dog away. The movement will see what to do with him." The Commission found that Lolo Sono was severely assaulted at the Diepkloof residence with the knowledge of Madikizela-Mandela. They found that he was killed by Jerry Richardson, her close confidant. Sibuniso Tshabalala's fate was "linked to that of Lolo Sono", assaulted at the same place and murdered by Richardson. The allegations regarding both men "were unfounded and false." Jerry Richardson himself "was a police informer."

Ms Koekie Zwane was the girlfriend of an MUFC member, and she died of multiple stab wounds on 18 December 1988. She too was an alleged informer, and was murdered by Richardson. The latter applied to the TRC for amnesty and stated that Koekie was killed on Madikizela-Mandela's instructions. The Commission also found that four youths, Thabiso Mono, Pelo Mekgwe, Kenneth Kgase, and Stompie Seipei were abducted from the Methodist manse in Soweto on 29 December 1988 by Richardson and other followers on the instructions of Madikizela-Mandela. The boys were accused of engaging in sexual relations with the Rev Paul Verryn, who ran the manse, and Seipei was singled out as an alleged informer. All four were assaulted in Diepkloof, and Madikizela-Mandela "initiated and participated in the assaults." Seipei was "last seen alive" at her residence, and as the Commission oddly phrased it, she "failed to act responsibly in taking the necessary action required to avert his death."⁸⁷

The killing of Dr Asvat on 27 January 1989 and the assault on Seipei were inter-related. Evidence exists that shortly before the latter's death, Asvat, known as "the people's doctor", told Madikizela-Mandela: "This boy is seriously ill... You must take him to hospital." Asvat also vehemently refused to provide her with confirmation that an abducted youth had been sodomised. Asvat was shot dead in his surgery by Zakhele Mbatha assisted by Thulani Dlamini without robbery occurring. Both men told the TRC in considerable detail that they were promised R20,000 by Madikizela-Mandela for the murder. Ebrahim Asvat, brother to the slain doctor, also told the Commission that the written statement of the two killers (eventually sentenced to 30 years jail) implicating Madikizela-

⁸⁷ *Final Report*, vol 2 ch 6, pp. 556-570. The Commission repeatedly expected or hoped that Madikizela-Mandela would act responsibly, as they recorded their findings of her near constant lies, evasions and criminality. This tendency reached a crescendo in Bishop Tutu's effusions at the end of the hearings, noted below.

Mandela was never produced in court, and that the police were unwilling to pursue the matter. The TRC said that Madikizela-Mandela had "deliberately and maliciously slandered Verryn" in an attempt to divert attention away from herself. But they too seemed reluctant to take matters further, They found that the death of Asvat and the linking of his death with the sexual abuse allegations "raised serious concerns which the Commission was unable to unravel." They appeared to pin the blame on the police; the detectives investigating Asvat's murder were "hasty" in their assumptions and "negligent" in their subsequent work.⁸⁸

But of greater importance were the lies and evasions of the woman concerned and how she was consistently supported in these endeavours by senior-most persons in the ANC. Katiza Cebekhulu was a participant and material witness in the events concerning Asvat, and he was, in the findings of the Commission, "taken out of the country and placed illegally in a Zambian prison at the request of the ANC". They note that President Kenneth Kaunda had "admitted that the ANC requested his assistance with Cebekhulu." Madikizela-Mandela was "involved in at least the initial hand-over" of the man, who was then held for three years without trial.⁸⁹ Aubrey Mokoena was once prominent in the UDF, and by 1997 an ANC MP and parliamentary committee chair. He had accepted Madikizela-Mandela's lies about the four abducted youth, and told the TRC in 1989 that "Mama" had been so overcome by the "altruism" of a social worker that she had mistakenly associated with thugs. The Rev. Frank Chikane had been a member of the ineffectual Crisis Committee which Nelson Mandela set up to contain the scandal, and in 1997 was deputy head of the Deputy-President's Office; he too liked to refer to Madikizela-Mandela as "Mama", and acted evasively before the TRC. Cyril Ramaphosa had also been a member of the Crisis Committee, but repeatedly declined to offer his testimony to the TRC. Before the public hearings began on 18 November 1997, Dullah Omar, Minister of Justice, voiced his support in the terms which Madikizela-Mandela was herself inclined to use, that the struggle exonerated everything: murder charges against her were not comparable to the atrocities of the former minority government, and they had to be seen in the context of apartheid.⁹⁰

The views and actions of Morobe and Cachalia were totally different. Appearing before the TRC in November 1997, they recalled the situation a decade earlier, when they were acutely aware that Madikizela-Mandela's victims were chiefly weak and vulnerable boys and girls, and that the UDF had campaigned for the release of children from government detention. Stompie Seipie's body had been discovered, and "community anger was at boiling point", Cachalia said. As national leadership of the UDF we knew we had to do something bold and imaginative. The public statement of 16 February 1989, Morobe admitted, had a profound effect on him both "as an individual [and] on my relationship with

⁸⁸ Good, *The Liberal Model*, pp. 121-2 and *Final Report*, vol 2 ch 6, pp. 571-2.

⁸⁹ *Final Report*, vol 2 ch 6, p. 576.

⁹⁰ *The Liberal Model*, pp. 120-21.

Mrs Madikizela-Mandela (though always coming to me in undercurrents)... [But] this was an issue of principle that my organisation had to confront." Cachalia added: "It was one of the most difficult decisions I have ever made." A part of me, he said, now wants to forget the nightmare; "but another part says we cannot go forward until there's some accountability." This was not just an issue of the past but of the present and future in South Africa. Cachalia recommended that anyone found guilty by the TRC of gross human rights violations should be debarred from holding public office thereafter; the penalty of lustration.⁹¹

But the evasions continued, and over four days of hearings Madikizela-Mandela could watch, on the summary of Antjie Krog, powerful men "bend over backwards to avoid saying anything bad about her." Tutu went further and added his own and the Commission's prestige to a gratuitous endorsement of her claims. It was as if Morobe and Cachalia and the relatives of her victims had not spoken:⁹² "Many, *many* love you. Many, *many* say you should have been where you ought to be. The First Lady of the country... I love you very deeply... You are a great person."⁹³

On the TRC's conclusions, Madikizela-Mandela's methods were similar to those of Mbokodo, in their pursuit of agents, spies and informants, and their reliance on torture and killing. "Those who opposed Madikizela-Mandela and the MUFC or dissented from them were branded as informers, then hunted down and killed." She was "politically and morally accountable" for gross violations of human rights. But their conclusions on the role of the ANC was muted and repeatedly qualified. It "must bear some responsibility", they said, "for not taking a more determined stance regarding the controversy surrounding Ms Madikizela-Mandela, particularly in the period following the unbanning of the organisation. The apparent complicity of elements within the ANC to obstruct the course of justice by removing witnesses and co-accused...is a case in point."⁹⁴

But the TRC ruled out Cachalia's specific recommendation of lustration, on the grounds that "it would be inappropriate in the South African context." It offered no clarification of this conclusion. The Skweyiya Commission, however, had earlier reached a contrary position, finding unambiguously and pertinently that "no person who is guilty of committing atrocities should ever again be allowed

⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 119-20.

⁹² While the Commission as noted attributed 12 killings to her and the MUFC, Trehwela's estimate is 16 murders, *op.cit.*, p. 49. David Beresford offered another listing of some 14 actual and attempted murders in the *Mail and Guardian*, 21 November 1997 (reproduced in *The Liberal Model*, p. 122).

⁹³ Tutu's emphasis. According to the TRC's deputy chair, Alex Boraine, Madikizela-Mandela had challenged the integrity of the Commission, and Bishop Tutu went too far in his conciliation of her: "His hugging of [her] during the hearing, and his declaration of love and admiration, left the Commission wide open to the charge of bias." Cited in the *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 1 October 2000, and *The Liberal Model*, p. 228.

⁹⁴ *Final Report*, vol 2 ch 6, pp. 580-1.

to assume a position of power. Unless the ANC is prepared to take decisive action, the risk of repetition will forever be present.”⁹⁵

The Killing of Thami Zulu, Lusaka, 16 November 1989

The killing of Muziwakhe Ngwenya (aka Thami Zulu or TZ) was complex, calculated and callous, and it resulted from the involvement of top ANC leaders, Modise, Hani and Jacob Zuma, with Thabo Mbeki in a supportive position. He was born in Soweto and educated there, in Swaziland and briefly at the University of Botswana from whence he joined MK. After training in the Soviet Union, he was a commander in southern Angola, where the experienced Ronnie Kasrils described him as “an exceptionally handsome individual [who] looked every inch a soldier.”⁹⁶ His capacities were also recognised by Hani who appointed him regional commander of MK operations in Natal, a hard fought theatre on all sides. He successfully stepped up MK’s attacks, but his career ended abruptly after two disastrous incidents in 1988, in which some nine or more infiltrators from Swaziland were massacred. Zulu’s deputy, Cyril Raymond (aka “Ralph” or “Fear”), and his wife, Jessica, were summoned to Lusaka. Raymond “subsequently died in detention”, reportedly drowning in his own vomit, “after refusing to sign a confession to being a South African agent.” Zulu was formally detained, without being informed of the basis for this action. Jacob Zuma was a member of Mbokodo, 1985-88, and became its deputy director in 1988. After some twelve years in Swaziland and Mozambique, he had moved to Lusaka in early 1987 where he became “Chief of the Intelligence Dept”.⁹⁷ According to Mac Maharaj, the operational principle within the enclosed spheres of security and intelligence in Mbokodo and the ANC, around 1988, was that “no one was beyond suspicion.”⁹⁸

Zulu spent 14 months in detention, part of which was spent in an isolation cell lying all day on a mattress on the floor. After two months of interrogation, Mbokodo had found no conclusive proof of his collaboration with the enemy, but recommended that he should be “disciplined for criminal neglect” in the

⁹⁵ *Report*, p. 19.

⁹⁶ Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Johannesburg and Cape Town, Jonathan Ball Publishers, revised and updated 2004, p. 125.

⁹⁷ He had become a member of the NEC in 1977. Jeremy Gordin, *Zuma: A Biography*, Johannesburg and Cape Town, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2008, pp. 33 and 91.

⁹⁸ David Beresford, *Truth is a Strange Fruit*, Auckland Park, Jacana, 2010, pp. 266-7, and Padraig O’Malley, *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa*, Viking, New York, 2007, p. 268; for example, senior members of the SACP suspected that Cyril Ramaphosa worked for the CIA, and Maharaj’s wife, Zarina, was suspect because she worked for the British High Commission and the United Nations. Pallo Jordan was a member of the NEC, regarded in the party as an intellectual and a critic of the authoritarianism of Mbokodo. He was detained in 1983. According to Zarina Maharaj, he “was locked up for six weeks in Lusaka in a corrugated iron hut and nearly died of dehydration.” He has refused to discuss his detention and treatment. O’ Malley, *op.cit.*, p. 220, and the Skweyiya Report, p. 18.

case of the June 1988 deaths. At the TRC's Recall Hearing, the ANC specifically denied that he had been tortured or subjected to cruel or degrading treatment.⁹⁹ But on the findings of the Skweyiya Commission, Zulu had gone into Mbokodo as "a large, well-built slightly overweight person, and came out gaunt, frail and almost unrecognisable." He was released on 11 November on orders emanating from the office of ANC president Oliver Tambo, following a medical examination at the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) in Lusaka which showed he was HIV positive. He was taken to stay at the house of a long-time friend, Dr Ralph Mgiijima, head of the ANC Health Department. He died four days later.

When the TRC considered the case they had evidence from Skewiya and other sources to draw on, including evidence from a former Civil Cooperation Bureau intelligence officer that Zulu may have been "killed by MK". They also had a medical report noting that "his death was brought about by poisoning which must have been taken in within a day or at most two days prior to his death." Thabo Mbeki testified at the "recall hearing" in May 1997, that it was accepted that our investigations into the extremely high casualty rates in the MK forces under his command constituted "sufficient grounds for his recall". He declared that: "At no time was he tortured or subjected to any undue pressure."¹⁰⁰ Mbeki accepted that the former commander died of poisoning, but insisted that it was a matter of conjecture as to who administered this poison. Nonetheless he concluded that: "Our own security department has reason to believe that an agent or agents of the regime was responsible." The TRC's findings were equivocal and negative: Despite the fact that no conclusive evidence that Thami Zulu was a South African agent had emerged, the TRC "was unable to make a conclusive finding."¹⁰¹

Trewhela and Beresford suggest that conclusions can in fact be reached about how Zulu was poisoned. Samples of his blood and stomach contents showed traces of diazinon, an organic phosphorous pesticide, and the equivalent of some three pints of beer. Diazinon is pungent, it does not dissolve in water or tea but is soluble in alcohol. A forensic scientist in London, shown these samples, concluded that "three pints of beer taken within a twenty-four hour period and each containing a teaspoon full of diazinon could have been fatal." But it would have had to be taken within the one or two day period as noted. Skweyiya accepted that this was the likely way in which Zulu was killed. For Trewhela, the murderers were thus to be found among those who had access to Zulu between 13 and 15 November. And "if poison was administered in three bottles of beer, those who supplied it were almost certainly members of the ANC and perhaps very senior members." Arguably there would have had to be

⁹⁹ ANC, "Further Submissions and Responses", pp. 18-19.

¹⁰⁰ This claim was also made a year earlier, when the ANC said that Zulu was never imprisoned and spent most of his time in party residences separate from the rest of the community. "Statement", 19 August 1996, p. 114.

¹⁰¹ *Final Report*, vol 2 ch 4, pp. 358-9. Kasrils' conclusion, however, is firm: "I do not believe he was a police agent." *Op.cit.*, p. 261.

understanding and some degree of trust between Zulu and the potential poisoners if the former was voluntarily to drink beer with them over a period.

On the known record, the last days of Zulu proceeded as follows. On Sunday 12 November, Mgjima himself was taken ill and rushed to hospital for emergency operation. On 13 November, he phoned Hani from hospital and asked him to check on Zulu. Hani accompanied by Modise entered Mgjima's house and found Zulu unwell. On evidence provided earlier by Hani to journalists Phillip van Niekerk and Beresford, two MK men known to be loyal to Hani were sent to the house to look after Zulu. The identity of these men has not been revealed. On 14 November Hani returned, and Zulu, on Hani's account, "appeared to be worried that the Security Department [Mbokodo] is going to finish him off" if he fell into their hands. On 15 November Hani called an unnamed doctor to attend to Zulu, and he again left two MK men to keep watch at his bedside, where he suffered attacks of vomiting and diarrhoea. On 16 November Thami Zulu was rushed gasping for breath to UTH, where he died aged 35.¹⁰²

Beresford notes the "missing" 15 years in Jacob Zuma's biography, between 1975 when he left South Africa for training in Russia and 1990 when he was among the first of the notable exiles to return. Zuma's biographer states that there is "very little information" about those crucial years; one of Zuma's main task then was "running Swaziland/Natal operations", and he purposefully "did not want to be known."¹⁰³ Beresford states that these silences "justif[y] an assumption, if not a presumption of guilt." What knowledge did he have about the deaths of Zulu and Cyril Raymond? He was in legal terms "at all material times in a position to know, which in turn attracts an assumption that he did know." Politically, at the top of ANC intelligence, he was in a position to know, and he had direct experience in the area where Zulu had operated.¹⁰⁴ At the very least, why did he not act to secure the release of Zulu from the organization of which he was deputy director?

Thabo Mbeki believed in 1997 that Thami Zulu was a suspected agent of Pretoria, falsely declared that he was neither tortured nor pressured during the 14 months that dramatically altered his health and appearance, and firmly

¹⁰² Hani's biographers' approach to Thami Zulu's death is superficial and unbalanced, They refer to the "writing of disgraced former ANC cadres", without consideration of these writings or the nature and causes of their supposed disgrace. They conclude with reference, again unexamined, to "anti-ANC former cadres [who] have insisted on casting aspersions on Hani." But they agree that it was "Hani, who, together with Joe Modise, saw Zulu in the hours before his death." *Op.cit.*, p. 199.

¹⁰³ Further, "he still will not talk in detail about the operational events of those days." They are "the property" of the ANC, he characteristically proclaims. Gordin, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ The current quasi-legal concept of "wilful blindness" perhaps supplements that of the presumption of guilt. First used in the Enron trials in the United States, it accepts that if it can be demonstrated that key information was available, and that it was part of an executive's job to know of such information, then that person did in fact know. The notion is current in the case of the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland and their paedophile priests, and appears relevant to the responsibilities of Rupert Murdoch for malpractice on the part of editors and journalists under him in News International, over whom he exercised notoriously high levels of control.

implied that Pretoria's agents poisoned him. For Beresford, however, Thami Zulu "had all the courage of a warrior but lacked the knowledge as to where the enemy lay." Perhaps, more precisely, he was denied knowledge through the lies and prevarication of an Mbeki and Zuma, and the duplicity and ambivalence of Modise and Hani. If the latter's funeral oration at least was true, MK held no real doubts about Zulu's loyalty and competence. He was buried in Swaziland in November 1989, with the mourners limited to family. A statement signed by Modise and Hani, respectively Commander and Chief of Staff of MK, declared: The "Glorious army of our people salute you... we remember your efficiency and competence... we recall with sheer pride and emotion... this giant and gallant fighter."¹⁰⁵ Or the lies were compounded further, as they continued to be over coming years and decades. What is certain is that the missing information concerning Zulu's killing remains in the hands of the ANC. When Skewiya reported to Mandela in 1992 it recommended that "secret ANC internal reports" about his death "should be made public".¹⁰⁶

Operation Vula

This significant politico-military intervention came in the midst of the talks which the imprisoned Nelson Mandela had initiated with Pretoria, after he was moved from Robben Island to more private conditions at Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town in 1985, from where he wrote to Kobie Coetsee, minister of justice, asking for a meeting to discuss talks between the ANC and the government. "It was clear to me", he subsequently wrote, "that a military victory was a distant if not impossible dream. It was time to talk." Between around 1985 and Mandela's release in February 1990 at least 48 meetings between Mandela and government representatives followed. When informal talks were succeeded by formal negotiations, 1990 through 1994, the detailed settlement which was then hammered out, on O'Malley's reasoned judgement, "was within the framework [the informal talks] had established."¹⁰⁷ Over much the same earlier period, Thabo Mbeki had held his own separate and largely secret discussions with official and non-official government representatives in various world capitals.

But as late as August 1989, president Tambo in Lusaka remained unclear about who Mandela was talking to and what he was saying. (319) Even more, other senior ANC figures did not believe that a military victory was either distant or impossible. Vula was a clandestine military-political operation with dual aims, devised and substantially implemented by a very small and highly secretive elite. Vula would locate senior ANC in South Africa, chiefly to "take overall charge of the struggle", and simultaneously, in Maharaj's words, "to move towards a people's war." (251)

¹⁰⁵ Trewhela, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-06 and Beresford, *op.cit.*, 185-87, 266-68, and 295-96.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Trewhela, *op.cit.* p. 74.

¹⁰⁷ O'Malley, *op.cit.*, pp. 301-2. Where references in this section are to this book, only page numbers are noted in the text.

This was to be the implementation of Slovo's formulation at Kabwe, which accorded a deeply subordinate, highly abstract and contentious role to the people: those who were simply referred to as "the risen masses" would be turned by unstated means into "organised groups of combatants", while an externally based "core" elite would function as an "officer core"; it would culminate with the "seizure of state power".¹⁰⁸ President Tambo in Lusaka was in overall charge, assisted by Joe Slovo. The latter, Maharaj and Hani agreed fully about the need and feasibility of "people's war." By early 1987, Tambo and Slovo had selected Maharaj to go back into the country and head the operation to establish an infrastructure of sophisticated, autonomous communications "separate from anything else on the ground", and "on-the-spot military recruitment and training and caching of arms." Chris Hani was also selected, along with, on Maharaj's expectations then, Jacob Zuma, as a third NEC (and SACP) member.

The years 1986-88 were spent in preparations. This work "fell almost entirely on [Maharaj's] shoulders." Siphiwe Nyanda, who claimed a strong active-service record, was his deputy, and Vladimir Shubin was brought into the small loop by Tambo and Slovo as "our key link on the Soviet side". Maharaj had lived outside South Africa from 1977-88, and his own military experience was scant; his training had been limited to 1962. He therefore took "a refresher course" in the GDR and Cuba, along with training in Moscow on urban warfare. "Pressure was mounting on the ANC" from inside and outside the country in 1987-88, "and we needed to do everything to hasten the struggle at home". (245-53)

Taking overall charge meant in fact that Vula "infiltrated the MDM" in order to "seduce MDM leaders", to "hijack their revolution-in-the-making", and allow the exiled ANC leaders to return with ease and simply appropriate the organisations of the mass democratic movement. Vula was intentionally "subversive" of domestic democratisation. It wasn't there, in Maharaj's words, to "support the establishment of people's committees", because "repression directed at the masses needed to be countered by MK", and rudimentary organs of people's power also needed to be defended. "Vula's rationale was that authority needed to be asserted", and this could only be done if leaders from the NEC came in and worked with domestic figures at every level. (247-8) What Allan Boesak understood as the militarisation of the UDF was well underway. Vula was a secret arms importer, bringing in and storing across the country, "huge quantities of arms", and simultaneously "a propaganda and crisis management operation in dealings with the MDM."

From around late 1988, Maharaj was in close contact with leaders of the MDM, particularly, he says, with Jay Naidoo, Ramaphosa, Valli Moosa, Frank Chikane, Sydney Mufamadi and Murphy Morobe. These were told not to disclose they were working with him and interacting with the ANC. This "core committee" set

¹⁰⁸ Citations based on conference documentation by Tom Lodge, "The Interplay of Non-Violent and Violent Action in the Movement Against Apartheid in South Africa, 1983-94", chapter in Roberts and Ash, *op.cit.*, p. 223.

the political agenda, he claims, for both COSATU and the UDF, in consultation with Vula and Maharaj. (262, 265 and 281)¹⁰⁹

The latter states that in late 1988, Vula's "primary mission" was still to build the long term capability of MK to "fight a protracted people's war." He reports that for Slovo, in June 1990, three months after the unbanning of the liberation parties and Mandela's release, "the real thing" was still people's war. Hani was at least as enthusiastic a proponent of the strategy, and the three along with Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, were together on the Politburo of the SACP in 1988-89. Complicating the clandestine activities and relationships further was Operation Bible, whose role supplemented or duplicated Mbokodo's in aiming "to identify apartheid agents within the upper echelons of the movement". Bible reported to Zuma both before and after he became deputy director of Mbokodo—Gordin adds that "it had fallen under Zuma in 1988-89".¹¹⁰ Maharaj says that "a symbiotic relationship evolved between between Vula and Bible." (268, 271 and 318)

Hani's exhortation to violence was expressed directly to ordinary people in highly fanciful and adventurist terms. Existing MK elements in the northern border areas with Zimbabwe and Botswana had difficulty sustaining themselves against strong SADF units. Hani nevertheless called on unarmed, untrained people to organise themselves into small mobile units against the same powerful forces. It was incumbent on all freedom loving South Africans to realise that revolutionary violence was the answer. "We know our people are disadvantaged... But we are saying to our people, use every weapon you can lay your hands on... use everything that is available... to inflict casualties on the enemy." Mobile units should use "sneak and surprise" tactics emanating from within communities, schools, factories and home to "run, hide, trap and strike at the enemy." He proposed creating "grenade squads" and ensured, his biographers claim, that these were armed "as far as was possible". Even after the adoption of the Harare Declaration by the Organisation of African Unity in August 1989, and the decisive movement towards Namibian independence, and then the rapid shift to negotiations, Hani retained his fixation: "Armed struggle is the mobiliser, the inspirer", he insisted.¹¹¹

United Nations resolution 435 on independence in Namibia, necessitated closure of ANC camps in Angola, and implementation of the transition began in

¹⁰⁹ Naidoo offers some corroboration that these were indeed Maharaj's aims and methods. He was invited to a surprise meeting with the Vula leader in Overport, Durban, at some unstated time probably in 1988, to learn that Maharaj was on a secret mission "of consolidating the underground." Naidoo found him "highly secretive and manipulative", and Vula's trademark was "conspiracy and intrigue." Maharaj "truly believed that he was the 'kingmaker'" and "his sense of political self-importance ignored much of the home-grown strategic capability within COSATU." Naidoo stressed, he says, that while he was prepared to work as before with the ANC: "I would never take orders from him or anyone else" outside the [trade union] constituency he represented." Naidoo, *op.cit.*, pp. 151-2.

¹¹⁰ Gordin, *op.cit.* p. 91.

¹¹¹ Smith and Tromp, *op.cit.*, pp. 165-66 and 213.

April 1989. Uganda was the only other country offering MK temporary re-location into what were known to the ANC to be overcrowded holding centres, with little or no pretence of military readiness.¹¹² The known preference of the soldiers was to go to South Africa. Hani was ready nonetheless to persuade them to fall into line with another distant re-location, offering them “lots of Coca-Cola” and false promises about accommodation and food in east Africa. Not until 1992 did the first contingents leave Uganda for South Africa. But his role and influence descended into the populist-revolutionary absurd after his arrival in Johannesburg in April 1990 on temporary indemnity. He quickly formed “a tight partnership” with Madikizela-Mandela. In his biographers’ hyperbole: “their iconic pairing—both wearing MK fatigues and boots... striding side by side in a choreographed suite—aroused the expectant nation’s imagination.” As they themselves allow, “there was indeed a similarity between the characters of [The Lady] and Chris Hani.”¹¹³

People’s war was given its last brief and bloody expression at Bisho in the Ciskei Bantustan on 7 September 1992, under the theory of “rolling mass action” and “the Leipzig option”. The government of Brigadier Oupa Gqozo was deeply unpopular and supposedly ready for toppling; for Kasrils, a leading Vula operative, just a “pint-sized individual with an outsized military hat.” Along with Hani, Steve Tshwete and Ramaphosa, they led around 80,000 unarmed marchers against awaiting Ciskei troops, intending, as Tshwete declared on the spot, to “drive the pig from the barn.” The leaders, with Kasrils and Ramaphosa at their fore, narrowly escaped injury, but 29 other demonstrators were killed and more than 200 injured, some seriously, in sustained gunfire.¹¹⁴

The assault plan had been endorsed without dissent by all 68 NEC members, and in a “collective decision on the ground”, Ramaphosa would try to talk his way past the barricaded soldiers while Kasrils would make a flanking charge”. The latter was initially unapologetic for the deaths and injuries. “One cannot regret what one does in good faith in the best judgement of the collective leadership. Casualties take place all the time... We can’t regret trying to go forward.”¹¹⁵

De Klerk’s inclusion of MK and the SACP among the unbanned organizations in February 1990, and the absence of stiff conditionalities, also “came as a surprise” to Mac Maharaj. Other events, domestic and foreign, brought further problems. Oliver Tambo’s stroke in the previous August, produced “a leadership vacuum in the ANC” just when decisiveness was pre-eminent. The eventual

¹¹² Both moves apparently seen by Maharaj as buttressing the commitment to sustained people’s war in South Africa. O’Malley, *op.cit.*, pp. 314-15.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-05 and 214-15.

¹¹⁴ Butler, *op.cit.*, p. 296.

¹¹⁵ Beresford, *op.cit.*, p. 278 and Kasrils, *op.cit.*, pp. 263-73. Raymond Suttner, another planner and participant, subsequently admitted that “we miscalculated”, and some of our marchers “may have provoked the shooting.” After Bisho, Ramaphosa said, “we felt we did not need to take risks that could lead to the loss of life”. Butler, *op.cit.*, p. 297.

acting appointment of Alfred Nzo as brought no rejuvenation since he lacked Tambo's decisiveness and strategic vision. Maharaj "never met with Nzo regarding Vula", and to the end the NEC remained unaware of the existence of the operation. Over scarcely a year to mid-1990, seismic change proceeded, and "suddenly", in Maharaj's consistently belated perceptions, people's war "seemed like an archaic conception."¹¹⁶

The Demise of the UDF

But the other main aspect of Vula's mission, the appropriation of the democratic movement represented prominently by the UDF, went remorselessly ahead. Attacked by internal critics like Aubrey Mokoena, that the Front was led by "a cabal" of shadowy, largely Indian influences—Madikizela-Mandela maintained this line of attack down until her last appearance in 1997 before the TRC, where she repeatedly referred to Morobe as "Murphy Patel" without admonition from the chair—Mokoena insisted that there were "important differences" between the ANC and UDF, and the latter's very existence "undermined" the party. For Peter Mokaba, another of Madikizela-Mandela's staunch allies, the Front was simply "redundant" in the growing environment of negotiations and incipient transition.¹¹⁷

Options facing the UDF supposedly narrowed to two between the end of 1990 and March 1991. One was to disband entirely as its existence was detracting from the ANC's predominance. The other, says Seekings, was to become a coordinating front for organisations in civil society concerned with development. Such groups were at their height in the early 1990s. "Molefe and other national leaders", he adds, "clearly favoured the second option." But many other figures were being pulled into top positions in the ANC; among them then, Lekota, Archie Gumede, Trevor Manuel and Cheryl Carolus. When Molefe addressed the Front's National General Council in March 1991, he acknowledged that its leaders no longer operated on the basis of sufficient mandates, and accountability was low because of the irregularity of meetings. But the probably biggest causal factor is only referred to obliquely by Seekings. The remnants of the UDF's leadership faced a "burden of resentment and hostility", and the advocates of the transformation option floundered.¹¹⁸

Later in 1996, well after the event of the enforced dissolution, the ANC made a belated, realistic and positive assessment of the UDF's origins and role. It was then acknowledged to be "essentially separate" from the ANC, and its formation in the early 1980s had indeed "transformed the political landscape." It represented a "maturing of ideological orientation" in the country, "based on

¹¹⁶ O'Malley, *op.cit.*, pp. 323-25 and 333.

¹¹⁷ Seekings himself says that the "prominence" of certain Coloured and Indian activists in the Front "easily fuelled racist allegations about cabals." *Op.cit.*, pp. 218-20, 227 and 312.

¹¹⁸ He stresses in fact "widespread hostility", but nowhere explains the actual cause and content of the ANC's hostility. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-83 and 284.

local initiatives and conditions." The success of the Front was based on its ability in linking together diverse social and community organisations.¹¹⁹ This statement appears to have had no effect on Mandela's thinking at Mafikeng in December 1997, below.

Maharaj was a featured speaker at the disbandment of the Front in March 1991. He seemed to make it clear that this was in fact more than an appropriation of the leadership and structures of the UDF, and that an erasure of its values and achievements, especially in democratisation and non-violence, was intended. He began with the words, "I am a soldier", and extolled the ideas of the armed struggle directed from outside throughout his speech. The "deliberate fashioning of a revolutionary dream of violence", as Boesak understood things.¹²⁰ Nothing that had been happening under the UDF "had given the ANC pause," nor had the prospect of a negotiated settlement, promoted by Mandela since the mid-1980s, deterred them from pursuit of people's war.¹²¹

At the core of armed struggle was of course MK, directed against a powerful and unscrupulous enemy. The Soviet military high command certainly did not underestimate the enemy: the ANC faced "a huge well-adjusted [war] machine, able through its strategy, tactics and technical capacities to counter practically the whole African continent."¹²² The ANC, by contrast, was consistently inclined to underestimate its enemy, and MK's performance was in consequence unimpressive. Between 1976 and 1982, its attacks numbered less than 200. Command structures were external, and there were never more than 500 MK soldiers deployed inside the country. For Lodge, this was essentially symbolic warfare (though simultaneously hard reality for the foot soldiers in the camps) designed to promote the ANC's popular status. Through the 1980s, South African police "continued to anticipate with precision" the arrival of guerrillas from across the border, especially from Swaziland; the average survival time of a soldier in the bush was six months.¹²³ MK operations were concentrated in the Witwatersrand and Durban, the closest to external supply lines, while the Eastern Cape remained "by far the best organised UDF region."¹²⁴

Barrell provides an assessment for the period until the eve of Vula. Some 4,000 youths had gone into exile within 18 months of June 1976, and "most" had

¹¹⁹ "Statement". 19 August 1996, pp. 10 and 84.

¹²⁰ Popo Molefe also believed that the revolutionary takeover of the state was an implausible plan. Lodge, "The Interplay", p. 222.

¹²¹ He actually called it a "desperate measure", neglecting the care and planning which Vula had invested into the appropriation of the UDF. Boesak, *op.cit.*, pp. 184-86.

¹²² Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa*, London and Scottsville, Pluto and the University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2008, p. 248. He was quoting the redoubtable "Comrade Ivan".

¹²³ Hani testified to Skweyiya that "we had sent people into the country and 60 per cent were either arrested or killed." Paranoia and hysteria was generated in MK and "people like Thami Zulu were victims of that situation." Report, p. 16.

¹²⁴ Lodge, "The Interplay of Violent and Non-Violent Action", *op. cit.*, pp. 215, 224 and 229.

joined MK.¹²⁵ By the end of 1987, MK had trained more than 12,000 soldiers, some 6,000 of whom had supposedly been deployed internally. Police figures claimed 694 of these were captured or killed. But in late 1987, there was no evidence to suggest that 5,000 or more MK cadres were *active* inside the country: "perhaps as many as 30 per cent had, in effect, abandoned their missions", some, for instance, joining the private criminality of Madikizela-Mandela. The weaknesses he notes were derivative of "a lack of strategic agreement and clarity within the ANC."¹²⁶ This was evident at the outset in the Wankie campaign but it became crucial in the mid-1980s when strategy oscillated between secret elitist talks with Pretoria and an accelerating pursuit of people's war, as Mbokodo's tactics and command failings further undermined MK's capacities, and the global and regional environments rapidly changed. The Soviet Union and its East European allies had been the ANC's most reliable backers since the early 1960s, financially, and in military equipment, training and logistics,¹²⁷ but the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 represented the final end of all that.¹²⁸ President F.W. De Klerk correctly saw it as terminating the ANC's armed struggle, and moved towards negotiations in less than three months.¹²⁹ Slovo, Maharaj and Hani took much longer to react.¹³⁰

Marais noted widespread disgruntlement at rank-and-file level at the Front's demise in March 1991,¹³¹ but Seekings claims that it bequeathed to the ANC a robust culture of debate and self-criticism. Few assertions could be further from the truth as regards the political culture of the ANC. Stern non-accountability

¹²⁵ Gordin, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

¹²⁶ Barrell, *op.cit.*, p. 64. His emphasis on active.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65. Shubin offers a partial audit of the training and equipment provided to the ANC, 1963-90, in *The Hot "Cold War"*, p. 249.

¹²⁸ The collapse of the GDR (aka Stasiland) was not a sudden event. The fall of the wall was preceded by a march of some 70,000 people around the Leipzig Ring on 9 October, and that was the third major demonstration since 25 September. These large protests in key public places in the cities showed the people that the repressive regime "possessed neither efficacy nor legitimacy." Charles S. Maier, "Civil Resistance and Civil Society: Lessons From the Collapse of the German Democratic Republic in 1989", chapter in Roberts and Ash, *op.cit.*, pp. 261 and 274. The Stasi, which elements in Mbokodo admired, represented probably the most developed surveillance state of all time. At its height it had 97,000 employees and 173,000 informers among a population of 17 million people; when part-time informers are included there was one informer for every 6.5 citizens. (In Hitler's Reich there was one Gestapo agent for 2,000 people, and under Stalin one KGB agent for 5,830 people.) The Stasi's operating principle, not unlike Mbokobo's, was "dictator-logic": "once an investigation was started into someone that meant there was suspicion of enemy activity": as their operatives said: "We investigate you, therefore you are an enemy." Anna Funder, *Stasiland*, London, Granta Books, 2004, pp. 57 and 199.

¹²⁹ Lodge, "The Interplay". p. 230.

¹³⁰ There were many antecedents to change in the communist world, in the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 within the Soviet hierarchy, his commitment soon after to non-intervention in central European states, and the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Afghanistan in February 1989.

¹³¹ Marais, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

prevailed as noted throughout MK in the 1980s and beyond. For Jacob Zuma, rising rapidly in December 1996, nothing in the country, including specifically the constitution, was "more important" than the ANC and its leadership; "once you begin to feel that you are above the ANC you are in trouble." And the ANC had always maintained, he added, that certain big issues could only be resolved in talks involving national leaders.¹³² Closure, non-accountability, predominance and elitism were the values actually upheld by the party.

Most of those norms were uppermost in the transfer of power in 1994. From the beginning of formal negotiations, says Waldmeir, the ANC and the National Party (NP) ensured that 'the cards were stacked against' the smaller parties and groups. Under the working device of "sufficient consensus", the two largest parties had agreed, in Ramaphosa's terms, "if we and the [NP] agree, everyone else can get stuffed."¹³³ The preceding talks process had tended to confer recognition on the ANC elite in prison and exile, and to deny it in consequence to the popular internal forces represented by the UDF and COSATU. According to Naidoo, there was "anxiety" in the latter that the ANC "would move quickly to sideline the internal movement", and their Central Executive Committee had discussed the possibility of being represented independently in settlement negotiations. Two seats at CODESA were supposedly offered to them by the ANC, but he and others in the Federation felt this was insufficient; this "was a mistake", he says, which reduced COSATU to "being a bystander in the negotiations."¹³⁴

Although the Founding Elections saw a turnout of about 85 per cent of eligible voters, the outcome was highly elitist. Around 3-5 May 1994, as the counting process faced collapse, the leaders of the ANC, NP and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) intervened to produce results acceptable to themselves; With the assistance of auditors and accountants, votes were "awarded"—the word used by Judge Johann Kriegler, chair of the Independent Electoral Commission—among the three party chiefs. The results were mathematically perfect, and a Government of National Unity within an orthodox liberal electoral system, was realised, and a miraculous Great Man theory of political change was firmly installed.¹³⁵

Tolerance for corruption within its own ranks was another of the values actually upheld by the ANC, and few were more prominent here than Joe Modise. He was rewarded for his failures in MK by President Mandela, who gave him the

¹³² Cited in Good, "Accountable to Themselves: Predominance in Southern Africa", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35,4, 1997, pp. 563 and 569.

¹³³ Patti Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of the New South Africa*, Harmondsworth, Viking, 1997, p. 241, and Good, *The Liberal Model*, pp. 102-03.

¹³⁴ Naidoo, *op.cit.*, pp. 214-15.

¹³⁵ The ANC got 62.7 per cent of the votes; the NP 20.4 per cent and thus six seats in cabinet and a deputy presidency; and the IFP 10.5 per cent and three cabinet seats. The Democratic Party, excluded from the award process, contended that some 1.46 million votes were fraudulent.

defence ministry with Kasrils as his deputy.¹³⁶ He spearheaded the start-up of the largest arms procurement programme in the country's history, possibly worth in total between R45 and R100 billion, thinks Feinstein, and in mid-1999 he moved smoothly—within three months—from the cabinet to the board room, taking the chair of two arms companies, Conlog and Labat Africa. This had not happened over night; Modise had long seen the defence portfolio in the first ANC government as a passport to great wealth.¹³⁷ From the beginnings of the transition he had quickly developed, notes Ensor, “a rapprochement with the apartheid military establishment”, and his “vision” of South Africa’s military capability offered the generals the modern equipment they desired in a policy that inter-linked foreign investment with economic development.

As early as 1996 he claimed that without a strong defence force, “no right thinking person would invest in South Africa.” Job creation through investment would come to naught without a strong military arsenal.¹³⁸ His plans for what became the big procurement package, he publicly explained, were built on both his old MK role and his new defence portfolio. Over three decades in exile he had made contact, he explained, with influential people around the world: “Add to that my experience as minister of defence, when I travelled... marketing Armscor products, and you will agree that I have built enormous contacts.”

Such ramifying contacts certainly represented sizable benefits to Modise. During 1998, one of the arms bidders, British Aerospace, donated R5 million to the MK Veterans Association, whose Life President was Modise, another allegedly bought him millions of shares in Conlog, and he reportedly also received “between R10 million and R35 million in cash from a variety of bidders.” This is almost certainly only a small part of the web of corruption surrounding Modise. Judgements on Modise’s now known record are scathing. In Feinstein’s view he was “almost universally perceived as incompetent and enveloped in allegations of corruption”, while for Bernstein he was “one of the most corrupt men” to have ever held high office in South Africa.¹³⁹ But not within the ANC government. At his death in late 2001, Joe Modise received the Order of the Star of South Africa—the highest civilian award—and he was extolled by President Mbeki: “A mighty tree has fallen”, he declared.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Possibly after Mandela’s first choice for defence, his old interlocutor Kobie Coetsee, faced “MK objections”. Drew Forrest, *op.cit.*

¹³⁷ Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

¹³⁸ Ensor, *op.cit.*; Forrest, *op.cit.*; and Norman Chandler, “Defence Revamp ‘to Protect Foreign Investment’”, *The Star*, 16 August 1996.

¹³⁹ Good, *The Liberal Model*, p. 143; Andrew Feinstein, *After the Party: A Personal and Political Journey Inside the ANC*, Johannesburg and Cape Town, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007, pp. 78, 155 and 208; and Beresford, *op.cit.*, p. 266. See also Ferial Haffajee, “Cadres Cash In: “MK Inc” Companies Secure R4 bn in Arms Subcontracts Alone”, *Financial Mail*, 4 May 2001.

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Feinstein, *op.cit.*, p. 236. Not surprisingly, given his career—as among other things, car thief, bank robber, drug dealer, and diversified arms trader—and the principle of universal distrust that he helped to instill in the ANC, Modise is accused today of being a double agent of Pretoria; on “overwhelming” evidence, Johnson states. *Op.cit.*, pp. 30-31 and 50.

A predominant, militarist, ethno-nationalist party

The unacceptability of all criticism was comprehensively and vehemently expressed by party president Mandela in his report to the ANC's 50th national conference in Mafikeng in December 1997. To highlight only relevant aspects of his five-hour long address: he referred to sections of the non-governmental (NGO) sector which claimed that their distinguishing feature was to be "a critical 'watchdog' over our movement, both inside and outside of government." While pretending to represent an independent and popular view, these NGOs actually worked to "corrode the influence of the [ANC-led] movement." Some of the argument for this "watchdog" role, he said, "was advanced within the ranks of the broad democratic movement at the time when we all arrived at the decision... that it was necessary to close down the UDF." The situation then was that certain elements which were assumed to be part of our movement, had "set themselves up as critics of the same movement, precisely at the moment when we would have to confront the challenge of the fundamental transformation of our country... and the determined opposition of the forces of reaction."

The dissolution of the UDF also came about because of efforts at the time to "set up an NGO movement separate from and critical of the ANC." But the past three years in government have taught us the lesson that "there are NGOs and NGOs. As a movement, we have to learn to make this distinction." Similarly, "it has become perfectly clear that the bulk of the mass media in our country has set itself up as a force opposed to the ANC... to campaign against both real change and the real agents of change, as represented by our movement, led by the ANC."

The "role of the opposition parties" was entirely negative and reactionary, "in their effort[s] to challenge and undermine our role as the political force chosen by the people to lead our country". Experience confirmed that the National Party "has not abandoned its strategic objective of the total destruction of our organisation and movement." The then Democratic Party (DP) had tried to present itself as "the most effective parliamentary opposition", but it remained an "implacable enemy" of the ANC, capable only of "vilification of the ANC." The most recent grouping to join "the miserable platoon of [our] opponents", the United Democratic Movement led by Bantu Holomisa, had the same objective of the NP—the "destruction of the ANC".

Opposition to the ANC was thus weak and pitiful, and simultaneously implacably destructive. Those whom the ANC could not co-opt would be forced into silence. Almost any political party, civic group or institution which opposed or acted independently of the ANC was, by that fact alone, racist, committed to preserving the legacies of apartheid and against social transformation. The leadership gathered at Mafikeng, he said, in whose hands "rests much of the future of our country for many years", must understand that the country remains essentially structured in opposition to transformation. Accomplishment of our task "requires that we should all be made in the metal of

revolutionaries." Experience also showed that transformation demands "the better deployment of especially our most experienced cadres" [sic].¹⁴¹

"Cadre deployment" was the method adopted at Mafikeng to deepen and extend the ANC's predominance. Every member of the ruling party was committed to defending and implementing the will of the party leadership, wherever he or she was deployed, even if it meant, as Zuma noted, acting outside the constitution and the law. Transformation necessarily involved extending the power of the national liberation movement over all levers of power: the military, police, bureaucracy, intelligence services, judiciary, parastatals, the media, and agencies like the public broadcaster and the central bank. As Zuma also indicated, the individual party member's thoughts and opinions were irrelevant; they are simply loyal cadres. Within a year of Mafikeng, the ANC adopted a "cadre policy and deployment strategy", and established national, provincial and local deployment committees to ensure that all cadres remained "informed by and accountable to" the party leadership.¹⁴² The idea of a free thinking critical cadre under these circumstances is as likely as it was for the cadres of the MK through the 1980s.

COSATU survived the ANC's appropriation of the democratic movement, densely embedded in the capitalist economy and possessed of strong and tested organisation. After 1990, trade unions, according to Lodge, "played a very important role in rebuilding the ANC's branch level organisation, and in demonstrating disciplined popular support for the positions ANC negotiators adopted" in negotiations with the De Klerk government. They emerged around the mid-1990s as "formidably strong organisations", having "imprint[ed] their own programmatic concerns on the political settlement, strengthening its democratic content."¹⁴³

Such upbeat assessments may be at least partly true, but they remain only part of the relevant equation. COSATU and the unions had placed trust in the capacities of the people in their work-places and communities, and they had implanted the principles of accountability and mandates and recognised the reliance of their own leadership on periodic re-election by the rank and file. But, despite their organisational and democratic strengths, they had been no more successful than the UDF in criticising the increasingly predominant ANC elite. The historic record shows that the necessary accompaniment to trust in the capacities of the people is a sharp and constant distrust in political elites. Opportunities had existed in the months preceding Mandela's release and the trade unions, which might have moderated such anti-democratic and a-historical perspectives from a position of strength, failed to do so. The UDF-MDM strongly criticised elitism and the established ANC belief that length of

¹⁴¹ Extracts from "50th National Conference: Report by the President of the ANC, Nelson Mandela", pp. 17-35, 51 and 73, and Good, *The Liberal Model*, pp. 114-15.

¹⁴² Gavin Davis, "Cadre Deployment is Never Okay", *Politicsweb.co.za*, 24 November 2010.

¹⁴³ Lodge, "The Interplay", pp. 227 and 229.

service was the principle qualification for office.¹⁴⁴ But by 1994, with the Great Man principle firmly emplaced, people overly venerated the returned leaders, as Bantu Holomisa observed, and the unions which might have moderated such false perspectives from a position of strength failed to do so.

Their moderation won the unions scant support from the ANC. Mandela's attitude at Mafikeng seemed burdened with resentment and hostility reminiscent of what was directed against the UDF. In various ways over the past three years, COSATU had been "doing more than represent the mere trade union interests of its members." Some among their leadership had asserted a role "separate and apart from and in some instances, in contradiction with the... leadership of our broad democratic movement." Analyses showed, he said, that union leaders had sought "sometimes strident conflict and contest" between themselves and "the leadership of the democratic movement." Mandela's thinking was rooted in two significant presumptions: the trade unions "are in a relatively privileged position" as the employed and organised workers in our country, while the preponderant ANC, he claimed, "represents [both] the people as a whole, and the African working masses in particular."¹⁴⁵

Towards the end of the 1990s, the myth of the armed struggle had been successfully inter-linked with the ANC's pre-eminence, and the idea was authoritatively asserted that rule by the heroes of the struggle was itself essentially democratic. This presumption was not challenged then, but as new social formations arose through the late 1990s, it has begun to receive serious examination around two important realisations: that "the ANC has created an anti-politics machine in which black people... feature as nothing more than objects of state policies or, worse, passive recipients of state-led service delivery."¹⁴⁶ Another rejoinder asserted directly that "the ANC did not set me free", and it began to review the actual domestic events of the 1980s: "While the ANC was detaining the likes of Jordan or torturing young women in its camps, it was people like my young friends and relatives under the banner of the [MDM]", who were "rendering the apartheid state unworkable... It was Trevor Manuel and Popo Molefe and others in the UDF, and Jay Naidoo at COSATU, who led our mothers on marches and stayaways. Meanwhile, the ANC was detaining and then poisoning the young leader Thami Zulu."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ According to Meredith, it was recognised then that Mandela "possessed a strong authoritarian streak and a preference for taking action on his own responsibility, for dealing directly with other leaders". Martin Meredith, *Nelson Mandela: A Biography*, London, Penguin Books, 1997, pp. 413 and 446.

He had of course amply demonstrated these tendencies throughout the talks process c. 1985-90.

¹⁴⁵ "50th National Conference", pp. 77-78.

¹⁴⁶ Jacob Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia*, Auckland Park, Jacana Media, 2009, p. 20.

¹⁴⁷ Justice Malala, "The ANC Did Not Set us Free", Timeslive, 3 October 2010. He was immediately attacked by Pallo Jordan, and the ANC officially labelled Malala a disgrace to journalism.

The significance of the South African process

Democratisation in South Africa in the 1980s was significant because it arose as a structured, class-based element within an advancing capitalist economy. The students, skilled and semi-skilled workers acquired a capacity for autonomous organizational development that helped make the UDF and COSATU the largest popular movements ever seen in the country, and in the case of the latter, distinctive among trade unions world-wide. Large numbers of dedicated community workers were quickly attracted behind the banner of the Front as they tried to make democratisation a reality in townships and villages. Over some three to five years, both formations developed principles for promoting the accountability of their leaders to the rank-and-file and for upholding mandates given to them by the membership, while stressing at the same time that no leaders were irreplaceable, and all should be subject to criticism. The UDF's Principles of our Organizational Democracy was perhaps the most sophisticated expression of this democratic thinking, and a potential negation to the purportedly universalistic Iron Law of Oligarchy.

Since January 2011 a great wave of protest and incipient democratisation has swept North Africa and elsewhere, and despots, once feared and loathed in almost equal measure, have been ousted. Huge demonstrations regularly occurred in Tahrir Square in Cairo, and sustained civil war, with crucial NATO backing, brought an end to the brutal regime of Colonel Gaddafi. But in late October, as Tunisians went to the polls to elect a constituent assembly, no coherent indications of long-term democratisation had yet appeared in North Africa to supplement and extend the brave action of individual protesters. The existing indications suggested an on-going tussle between Islamists and secular modernists, while still powerful military establishments waited on the sidelines. Perhaps only in Chile was sustained protest being registered for issues other than regime change. In actions unseen since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship a generation earlier, many thousands of students were braving water cannons and tear-gas and demanding educational reforms--specifically the introduction of free university education for all--and occupying their schools and colleges across the country in this popular and potentially potent cause.

After teenage girls began the occupation of Santiago's prestigious Carmela Carvajal primary and secondary school in May, their first move was to hold a vote. About half of the enrolment of 1,800 students participated, and the yays outnumbered the nays 10 to one. Ten times the police have seized the school since then, and each time the students have taken it back again. In October around 200 state elementary and high schools as well as a dozen universities were occupied, and weekly protest marches attracted between 50,000 and 100,000 students across the nation. Counts of support for the students were an estimated 6 out of 10 Chilean adults, while the approval ratings of the government of President Sebastian Pinera (himself a billionaire) ranged from 22% to 30%. The correspondent of the London *Guardian* said that the students had "transformed the nation's political agenda", and centre stage in this process was 23-year old Camila Vallejo, president of Chile's leading student body (or

"Fech") and a member of the youth arm of the Communist party (the JJCC). October polls recorded 70% of Chileans backing the students' demands.¹⁴⁸ The students' action appeared to have dynamism and strong socio-political potentiality.

This paper has shown how the ANC asserted its political and economic domination over the UDF in the early 1990s, and it has endeavoured to restrict the political influence of COSATU since. But the class forces which underlay both formations remain, as positive forces for progress in the future. The country's distinctiveness in democratisation similarly remains. In Tunisia and Egypt the world has seen the bravery of individual protesters, but in South Africa it was largely organised working classes which strove for the furthest extension of democratic rights, beyond merely choosing among competing elites at regular elections, into the empowerment of people in their daily lives in work-places, schools, and communities. The social forces which produced these aspirations remain latent still.

About the author

Kenneth Good has taught and carried out research in Papua New Guinea and at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, as well as in Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. He was Professor of Political Studies at the University of Botswana in Gaborone for 15 years, until 2005, when he was declared a Prohibited Immigrant and summarily expelled from the country. In May 2010, the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in Gambia found comprehensively in his favour. Although legally bound by this decision, the Botswana government is yet to meet its obligations.

Good has published widely, including *The Liberal Model and Africa: Elites Against Democracy* (Palgrave 2002), and *Diamonds, Dispossession and Democracy in Botswana* (James Currey and Jacana Media 2008). His interests are broad, focussed upon democratisation and development; poverty and inequalities; corruption and non-accountability; the rights of indigenous peoples (esp the San/Bushmen); and southern African politics and development. Most recently, his research, writing and teaching has concentrated on the comparative and historical analysis of democratisation. At present he is adjunct professor in Global Studies at RMIT in Melbourne, visiting professor in Political and International Studies at Rhodes University, and an honorary fellow at Melbourne University. He can be contacted at kenneth.good AT rmit.edu.au

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan Franklin in Santiago, *The Guardian*, 7 and 8 October 2011.