

Nelson Mandela as the public face of the African National Congress and the international solidarity movement



By Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu

The year 1982 marked the 20th anniversary of the capture of Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela by the apartheid regime and the campaign to secure his release intensified in both South Africa and internationally. To mark this important occasion, a *Sechaba* journalist, using the initials, R.B., and in an article aptly entitled, 'Mandela: Man of the Resistance', asked pertinent questions about Mandela, who after twenty years behind bars remained the most vital symbol of the oppressed people's struggle for freedom and human dignity. Simply put, Mandela became the public face of the African National Congress (ANC) as a liberation movement and the world-wide anti-apartheid movement regardless of the fact that he was a political prisoner. The scribe noted that Mandela had become the most talked about and quoted, the most respected and popular figure in South Africa. Then, R.B. asked the following searching questions: How is one to explain this phenomenon? How to explain that thousands of young people who have never seen or heard the man acknowledge him as their guide and their leader; for no one under the age of twenty five can possibly remember hearing or seeing him, except the frozen lifeless photographs which were banned in South Africa. How can to explain the phenomenon of Nelson Mandela? What can account for the fact that now, at the end of twenty years, still in prison, he stands at the peak of public popularity, its most important national and international figure. The author of this piece further implored that it was not enough to look at Mandela; there must be something more to this phenomenon to make him the central figure he is?¹ The chapter will address these issues.

1 'Mandela: Man of the Resistance', *Sechaba*, July 1982, 20.

During the early 1960s the ANC took a strategic decision to use multi-lateral organisations such as Pan African Freedom Movement of East, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA) and the United Nations (UN) as battle sites to pursue the struggle for national liberation. The General Assembly's Special Committee on Apartheid became the specific focus of many of the ANC activities and offered badly needed access to the international community. In October 1963, three months after the arrest of the Rivonia trialists on 11 July 1963, the UN General Assembly by 106 votes to 1 requested the South African government to abandon the arbitrary Rivonia trial and to grant unconditional release to all political prisoners and to all person imprisoned, interned or subjected to other restrictions for having opposed apartheid policies. South Africa was the only country to vote against Resolution 1881 (XVII). For the first time, the entire international community declared its commitment to seek an end to repression and apartheid. Subsequently, the World Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners was established. Similarly, the ANC formed the Sub-Committee for the Release of All Political Prisoners. One of the functions of this sub-committee was to coordinate its official program with the international solidarity movement and multi-lateral organisations such as the Organisation of the African Union (OAU) and the United Nations (UN). Assistance for political prisoners and their families was perhaps the most significant assistance programme by the UN during the course of the liberation struggle in South Africa. Assistance was provided through voluntary agencies to all those persecuted by the South African government for their opposition to apartheid, irrespective of their political affiliation. As an example, the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF), a voluntary agency supported by the UN, funded the legal defence of the political trials in South Africa. In so doing it defended thousands of accused and provided continuous welfare aid to thousands of families and dependants of those detained, accused in courts, imprisoned, and executed. And it engaged in a host of supplementary activities. It funded the inquests, such as those of Steve Biko and Neil Aggett that revealed to the world the reality of what was happening in the cells and police stations of South Africa under apartheid.²

According to the ANC, the international solidarity movement was not confined to the western world. It was expansive and included anti-imperialist organisations and movements in its ranks. They included, among others, Organizacion de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de Asia, Africa y America Latina, the Non-Aligned Movement, World Federation of Trade Unions, Women International Democratic Federation, World Federation of Democratic Youth, International Union of Students, the World Peace Council, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation, the Afro/Asian/Latin American Solidarity Organisation, the Democratic Jurists Association, the Afro-Asian Writers Association, All-African Trade Union Federation, the Pan-African Youth Movement and the African Women's Conference. The liberation movement participated in

2 See South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 1 and Part 2* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008). A shorter version of this chapter was published as S.M. Ndlovu, 'Nelson Mandela as the Public Face of the ANC' in T. Falola (ed.), *Mandela: Tributes to a global icon* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2014), 179-188. See also S.M. Ndlovu, 'Mandela Presidential Years: An Africanist View', in R. Barnard, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chapter 8.

activities of these organisations and in many instances served on their executive committees. This was because; the ANC was of the view that it was impossible, if not fatal, for it to divorce the struggle for national liberation in South Africa from the struggles of the peoples of the world. These entire organisations supported the call for the release of all political prisoners in apartheid South Africa. In July 1963, for example, Duma Nokwe, Robert Resha and Tennyson Makiwane proposed to the UN Special Committee that:

All countries should...implement immediately the resolutions adopted at the seventeenth session of the General Assembly which included a request that all members break diplomatic relations with South Africa...boycott all South African goods and refrain from selling anything to South Africa...the UN should demand the immediate release of all political prisoners...banned persons.³

The challenge of armed struggle to overthrow the apartheid regime was in the open, acknowledged and endorsed by the liberation movement's leadership. And as in so many steps leading to it, Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela had been the public spokesperson, the pioneer- leading not by word alone but by example. It was that example which made him truly the man of the South African resistance movement, the symbol and the spearhead of the freedom struggle. Mandela's demeanour – including his impeccable attitude of mutual respect for his colleagues – was praiseworthy; he harboured no personal ambitions to oust the exiled Tambo from the ANC leadership. This is evident in Mandela's diary entry of Wednesday, 1 February 1962 which later formed part of the apartheid state's evidence against him during the Rivonia Trial. It records a pre-conference planning meeting between Mandela and his colleagues in Dar es Salaam. They were about to depart for Addis Ababa to attend a conference convened by the PAFMECSA to be held from 2–10 February 1962. Mandela, who was then the commander of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, was appointed by his colleagues to address this important meeting on behalf of the ANC, instead of Tambo, who, as the then deputy president of the organisation formed part of the official delegation as Chief Albert Luthuli, the president of the ANC was in South Africa. Mandela was uneasy about this arrangement and wrote in his diary:

... in the evening, OR [Tambo] ... Mzwai [Piliso] and I have a discussion and they suggest I should lead the delegation. I feel, however, that this may undermine OR's position and affect his weight in his general work [for the ANC]. We eventually reach a compromise [and consensus on the matter].⁴

Mandela successfully addressed the conference opened by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and his paper was subsequently adopted by the PAFMECSA conference as an official record on the current situation in apartheid South Africa. It is important

3 UN General Assembly, *Official Records*, Resolution 1761, XVII Session, 6 November 1962.

4 National Archives of South Africa (NASA), Transvaal Province Depot (hereafter TPD), Criminal Case (CC) 253/64 (Rivonia Trial), Exhibit 17.

to cite in length Mandela's contribution to this august conference which predated the formation of the Organisation of African Unity for it showed the trust in which Mandela held various leaders of the African continent. On 3 February 1962, Mandela addressed the conference on behalf of the ANC. I am citing this very important speech because I am of the view that such riveting speeches and ideas articulated by Mandela, after he had left the country clandestinely, were monitored by the apartheid regime. These were used as evidence during the political trials, resulting in his subsequent imprisonment- spending twenty seven years in jail as accused No 1 during the Rivonia trial. In his opening remarks to the delegates and dignitaries Mandela formally thanked some of the African countries which supported the struggle for national liberation in South Africa:

It was not without reason, we believe, that the Secretariat of PAFMECA chose as the seat of the Conference the great country Ethiopia, which for hundreds of years of colourful history behind it, can rightfully claim to have paid the full price of freedom and independence ... the movement for the boycott of South African goods and for the imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions against South Africa, has served to highlight most effectively the despotic structure of power that rules South Africa, and has given tremendous inspiration on the liberation movement. It is particularly gratifying to note that the four Independent African States which are part of this conference, namely, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Tanganyika are enforcing diplomatic and economic sanctions against South Africa.⁵

As the spokesperson of the liberation movement, Mandela partially contextualised the turn to the armed struggle in apartheid South Africa after decades of peaceful protest. The audience included the Heads of States- including Emperor Selassie who opened the conference proceedings:

...Hence it is understandable why many of our people are turning their faces away from the path of peace and non-violence. They feel that peace in our country must be considered broken when a minority government maintains its authority over the majority by force and violence. A crisis is developing in earnest in South Africa. However, no high command ever announces beforehand when its strategy and tactics will have to meet a situation... It is not surprising therefore one morning in October last year, we woke up to read press reports of widespread sabotage involving the cutting of telephone lines and the blowing up of power pylons. The government remains unshaken and white South Africa dismissed it as the work of criminals⁶.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

As a result, Mandela informed the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMESCA) conference why the ANC would eventually turn to the use of violence on 16 December 1961. The armed struggle was spearheaded by Umkhonto We Sizwe-the liberation movement's military wing of which he was the commander-in-chief:

On the night of December 16 last year, the whole of South Africa vibrated under the heavy blows of UMKHONTO WE SIZWE (The Spear of the Nation). Government buildings were blasted with explosives in Johannesburg, the industrial head of South Africa, Port Elizabeth and in Durban. It is now clear that this is a political demonstration of formidable kind, and the press announced the beginning of planned acts of sabotage in the country. It is still a small beginning because a government as strong and aggressive as that of South Africa can never be inducted to part with power by bomb explosions in one night and in three cities only. But in a country where freedom fighters frequently pay with their very lives and at times when the most elaborate military preparations are being made to crush the peoples' struggles, planned acts of sabotage against government installations introduced a new phase in the political situation and are a demonstration of the peoples' unshakable determination to win freedom whatever the cost may be. The government is preparing to strike back viciously at political leaders and freedom fighters.: but the people will not take the blows sitting down⁷.

Giving Mandela the platform at this watershed conference indicates that as early as the 1960's Tambo and other members of the executive committee regarded Mandela as the public face of the liberation movement- a status that would be confirmed in the 1980s.

The ANC, as a liberation movement, had always placed great importance on the battle for ideas and propaganda work. The outlawing of the organisation in 1960 naturally created numerous problems that could only be patiently solved. During the 1960s, the apartheid regime unleashed full force against the liberation movement, with thousands falling victim to massive police raids and rounds up by security police, leading to John Vorster to boast that he had broken the back of the liberation movement after it was banned in 1960. Unbeknown to him whilst he was making this claim, the ANC underground was regrouping. It is for the record that this process was severely damaged when the movement's leadership was captured in 1963 but the ANC underground survived and continued to grow.⁸

With Kwame Nkrumah spearheading international solidarity during the late 1950's and the anti-apartheid movement in England following suit, the exponential

7 Ibid.

8 See SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, [1960-1970], Volume 1* (Cape Town: Struik, 2004). See also S.P. Lekgoathi, 'The ANC's Radio Freedom, its audiences and the struggle against apartheid, 1963-1991' in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 6, [1990-1996], Part 1* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2013), chapter 13.

growth of the global anti-apartheid movement meant that the liberation movement had to fine tune its strategy to be disseminated to the broader world. Later, in addition to the economic sanctions, sports and cultural boycotts entailed using public history and other new sites for the struggle for national liberation. Consolidating the work undertaken by Radio Freedom, it was in this new period, particularly during the Rivonia trial that the underground propaganda, demonstrating the effectiveness of the ANC machinery and projecting its voice, became of incalculable value. Underground leaflets began to appear in the townships, factories and city streets. Passed on from hand to hand, these reminded the people that the spirit of resistance must never die. Mandela and other leaders were projected as voices of the people. These pamphlets and leaflets were complemented by slogans on walls proclaiming: 'Free Mandela', 'Free Sisulu' and Long Live the ANC'. As modest as these propaganda efforts were- the leaflets invariably produced through old cyclostyling machine- highlighted that the ANC could survive the most severe measures enforced by the apartheid regime. As underground actions began to increase in scope, however, it became difficult for the apartheid regime and the media to suppress the revolutionary ideas spread by the liberation movement. It became evident that Voster had not succeeded in breaking the ANC's back. An underground leaflet or pamphlet of the time pointed out that the ANC 'must have many backs'- and audacious acts of propaganda began to pierce the censorship screen.⁹ Later, towards the late 1960s to the late 1980s, these new sites included the mass media, ANC journals such as *Sechaba*, *Mayibuye*, *Dawn and Rixaka*. In this chapter I will pay my attention to articles published in *Sechaba* to promote Mandela as a public face of the liberation movement.

It is important to emphasise that Mandela always insisted that the official leader of the ANC was O.R. Tambo and therefore he was accountable to him. It is also worth elaborating the fact that Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Wilton Mkwayi and other leaders respected Tambo profoundly and felt honoured to be led by him. In return, Tambo supported efforts to use Mandela, through the Release Mandela Campaign, as a unifying symbol of the anti-colonial struggle for liberation. It was a clear case of mutual affection, displaying the human side of the liberation struggle. In fact the official title of the campaign established in 1980 was 'Release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners'. However, a collective is a collection of individuals and there are times in the life of a political movement when individual leaders embody some of the outstanding qualities one would expect from an astute leader. According to Mandela, the ANC had been extremely fortunate in this regard when past leaders are placed under scrutiny. Mandela had these affectionate words to say about O.R. Tambo:

It is a phenomenal leader who can succeed in exile to keep united a vast multiracial organisation with divergent schools of thought, with a membership deployed in distant continents, and a youth seething with anger at the repression of their people; a youth who believe that anger alone

9 . 'Voice of Freedom: Clandestine ANC Propaganda inside South Africa', *Sechaba*, Fourth Quarter, 1976, 38

without resources and proper planning can help overthrow a racist regime. Oliver Tambo achieved all this. To political and common law prisoners inside the country, to foreign freedom fighters, diplomats, Heads of State, O.R. was acknowledged as a shining example of a smart and balanced leader who was sure to help restore the dignity of the oppressed people and put their destiny in their [own] hands.¹⁰

The South African government tried to break the strong ties which existed between the international and exiled leadership of the liberation movement. It consciously adopted a divide-and-rule strategy by offering to release Mandela from prison. This offer was issued by P.W. Botha, the state president, in 1985. He laid down certain conditions during a heated debate in parliament. Mandela's immediate response was in a form of a smuggled statement on negotiations read by his daughter Zindzi (or Zinzi), at a political rally held at Jabulani Amphitheatre in Soweto. In his response, Mandela expressed surprise at the conditions the apartheid regime wanted to impose on him. He maintained that essentially, he was not a violent person and reminded P.W. Botha that in 1952, during the Defiance Campaign, he and his colleagues had written a letter to the then prime minister, Malan, asking for a round-table conference to be convened to find a solution to the crisis- but this had been ignored. He went on to point out that 'when Strjdom was in power, we made the same offer. Again it was ignored. When Verwoerd was in power, we asked for a national convention for all the people of South Africa to decide on their future. This too was in vain'.¹¹ Mandela expressed the obvious fact that only free people could negotiate:

... I cannot sell my birth right, nor am I prepared to sell the birth right of my people and of [our] organisation, the African National Congress, which was nabbed. What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I might be arrested on a pass offence? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife, who lives in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp for my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected? Only free people can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts... I cannot and will not and will not give any undertaking when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.¹²

P.W. Botha's cynical response was that since January 1985, and on several subsequent occasions, he had made several concrete offers which could have led to Mandela obtaining his freedom. As claimed by Botha, he possesses, on humanitarian grounds

10 N. Mandela, *Conversations with Myself* (London: MacMillan, 2010), 345.

11 *Sechaba*, April 1985, 2.

12 *Ibid.*

‘compassion for people of advanced years who are in prison’. He informed members of his parliament that the principle mentioned in his offer to release Mandela was not intended as a specific condition relating to a specific person, The condition simply proscribed the use of violence to achieve political ends that ‘was subscribed to in all civilised countries’. Botha reasoned that Mandela was being imprisoned by the South African Communist Party (SACP) and its affiliate ANC for he believed that both organisations had much to gain while Mandela was languishing in prison.¹³ In one of his endless speeches on the issue, P.W. Botha further informed members of parliament that there were well-known leaders from Western countries who supported him privately and in writing regarding the Mandela issue and intimated that ‘History will prove to be true when the documents are made [available to the] public’.¹⁴

In 1986, P.W. Botha, in pure brinkmanship, linked the question of negotiations and the release of Mandela to the Cold War. He suggested that there should be a release of political prisoners from Angola, the USSR and South Africa. He did this by posing the following question during a parliamentary debate:

If I were to release Mr Nelson Mandela on humanitarian grounds, could Captain Wynand du Toit [a South African prisoner held in an Angolan prison], Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly Scharansky [both Soviet dissidents] not be released on humanitarian grounds? A positive response to this question could certainly form the basis of negotiations between interested governments.¹⁵

It was a cunning strategy designed to take the decision away from Mandela and the ANC- the apartheid regimes’ convoluted way of getting around doing the inevitable- releasing political prisoners unjustly incarcerated in South African prisons. The intention was to set Mandela against his colleagues in prison and in exile, substantive negotiations with the ANC were unavoidable. The end result was that the ANC would be in disarray by the time negotiations recommenced.

The campaign for the release of political prisoners, 1960s and 70s:

In 1961 Mandela undertook various trips within the African continent and abroad to mobilise supporters for MK and, after his return, worked underground until he was arrested in Howick, Natal on 5 August 1962. He was convicted on 7 November and sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for incitement and two years for leaving the country without valid documents. Other members of the MK High Command continued with the national liberation struggle but were arrested on 11 July 1963 at

13 *South African Parliamentary Debates* (hereafter *Hansard*), 31 January 1986, column 15; Department of Foreign Affairs Archives, Union Buildings, Country File, Mozambique, BT 1/113/3, minutes between Samora Machel and R.F. Botha, Maputo, 13 August 1985.

14 *Hansard*, 13 August 1987, col. 3785.

15 *South African Parliamentary Debates, Hansard*, 31 January 1986, col. 15.

Lilliesleaf, a farm near Rivonia, Johannesburg, from which they had been running operations. At the farm police found a document titled 'Operation Mayibuye', a strategic planning document drafted by members of the High Command. The trial, which would go down in history as the Rivonia Trial, began on October 1963 and went on until 12 June 1964 when all the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment.¹⁶

On 6 November 1964 the South African government sent three prominent ANC activists, Vuyisile Mini, Wilton Khayingo and Zizakile Mkhabela to the gallows for MK-related activities. This was probably to tighten the noose around the ANC and to send a chilling message to political activists within the country. The lack of resources and materials, combined with the state's crippling strategy of imprisoning the entire MK High Command and Technical Committee, temporarily rendered the group leaderless within the confines of South Africa. Govan Mbeki has written about the problems faced by MK.¹⁷ The ANC, through the efforts of OR Tambo, the then acting president, regrouped in order to fill the leadership vacuum.

It is crucial for us to note that during the early 1960s newspapers such as *New Age* played a prominent role to promote Nelson Mandela as a public face of the liberation struggle before and after his arrest. In January 1962, Mandela departed clandestinely from South Africa. Over a period of months he visited North and East Africa, where he met prominent African leaders, underwent military training in Algeria and made arrangements for MK cadres to do the same. The *New Age* covered some of these events. As an example, the 8 February 1962 *New Age* edition front page caption was 'Nelson Mandela in Addis Ababa: Will return on completion of African Tour'. The report highlighted the fact Mandela was the underground resistance leader from South Africa who eluded the police net thrown to catch him. But he was in Addis Ababa to attend a top level conference of all South, Central and East African countries. The newspaper report elaborated that Mandela was standing shoulder to shoulder with exiled comrades who also attended the conference. They were O.R. Tambo, Tennyson Makiwane and Robert Resha who were all members of the banned liberation movement. Moreover, this was also the first time that Mandela reunited with Tambo after the latter left South Africa into exile. The highlight of Mandela's visit was his meeting with Ben Youssef Ben Khedda, the prime Minister of Algeria; Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure, Presidents Nasser and Nkrumah. During an interview with the press in Addis Ababa, Mandela accentuated that he will use all the support, not only moral but also material, for the South African struggle. He will ask for; the implementation of sanctions against South Africa; intensification of the boycott against South Africa; the arms embargo to take effect and stop western powers' arms supply to the apartheid regime. He also informed the media that there was no question of him settling in exile, leaving South Africa permanently. He would

16 SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, [1960-1970]* (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2004), chapter 2.

17 G. Mbeki, 'Then and After: The historical sketch of the struggle for liberation in Port Elizabeth', unpublished manuscript in my possession, 79 and 111.

return to South Africa to fight against the South African government as soon as his mission in the African continent was completed.¹⁸

When Mandela returned to South Africa, he held a briefing session with his colleagues whom he informed about his trip. They met at Lilliesleaf Farm and those present were Walter Sisulu, Moses Kotane, Govan Mbeki, Dan Tloome, JB Marks and Duma Nokwe. Subsequently, he went to Natal to brief colleagues and after meeting with MK's Natal Regional High Command, Mandela returned to Johannesburg, but on the way he was arrested on 5 August 1962 in Howick after being cornered and surrounded by three car-loads of police. He was dressed as a chauffeur, and was in company of Cecil Williams, a stage-producer. Both Mandela and Williams were arrested and driven to Pietermaritzburg. William was released two days later whilst Mandela was brought before a magistrate on the 6th August and then whisked off to Johannesburg. Only then did the news of his arrest leak out. Mandela made a brief court appearance in court in Johannesburg, handcuffed as he was brought in and taken from the courtroom.¹⁹

After the arrest of Mandela, numerous concerned people and organisations called for his immediate release- including release of other political prisoners. As an example, a resolution protesting against the arrest of Mandela and Walter Sisulu and demanding their immediate release was unanimously adopted at a mass meeting organised by the South African Women's Federation and held at the Bantu Social Centre (BSC) in August 1962. Almost one thousand people jam-packed the BSC and what appeared to be the entire staff of the Special Branch (security police) was present. Outside the BSC hall four van loads of armed police were on standby. In front of the racially mixed crowd was a calico banner which read: 'Women Demand the Release of Mandela'. Slogans in black paint appeared throughout the length and breadth of Soweto. The slogans read: 'Release Nelson Mandela', 'Free Mandela and Walter Sisulu who are our leaders', and 'We stand by our leaders'. The protest was not only confined in Johannesburg, security police recorded the names of those taking part in a multi-racial demonstration held at the Durban City Hall steps following the arrest of Mandela. The same afternoon the demonstrators moved to Durban's bus terminal reserved for Africans. The stream of thousands of workers hurrying home after work stopped to join the demonstrators who sang liberation struggle songs interspersed with slogans. The backdrop for the bus terminal demonstration was a new footbridge on which the following slogan had been painted a night before, 'Free Mandela'- 'Follow Mandela'. Winnie Mandela asked the *New Age* to appeal to people to rally and support their arrested leaders.²⁰ Also, in Cape Town there were slogans calling for the release of Mandela. The slogan painters were in action and slogans which read; 'Free Mandela', 'Long Live Mandela and Sisulu', 'Resist Nat-Nazism', 'Hang Vorster' and 'Jail Vorster' were painted on the Van Riebeck statue on the

18 'Nelson Mandela in Addis Ababa', *New Age*, 2 February 1962.

19 'Cops waited 3 days to arrest Mandela', *New Age*, 16 August, 1962.

20 'Release Nelson Mandela!' and also 'Mandela Slogans In Jo'burg', *New Age*, 16 August 1962.

Foreshore and the Bartholomew Diaz statue in Roeland Street bridge and a number of other places in the city including some a stone's throw away of police headquarters at Caledon Square.²¹ In Trafalgar Square, London, a poster demanding 'Release the Black Pimpernel' was seen by thousands of people when Britons and South Africans together protested against the arrest of Mandela. The demonstration was organised by the anti-apartheid movement. Earlier the police had barred the demonstration but Fenner Brockway; the MP of the Labour Party made representation to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the ban was withdrawn.²² Some of these slogans would resurface two decades later particularly at the massive music festival held in 1988 at Wembley Stadium, London. Therefore the campaign to free Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners originated from both inside and outside South Africa. As both Bhekizizwe Peterson and Anthony Bogues argue, the most pertinent forms of engagement between the oppressed African majority in South Africa and the international community are those that involved a circulation of intellectual and ideological precepts, as well as political and cultural imaginaries that in turn were crucial in making different types of affinities and alliances possible. As Bogues observes, we should:

...Think not just of geographic movements but flows of ideas between Africa and the [international world]. Secondly, within these flows new political ideas were generated. In this case many ideas generated at one site criss-crossed, in a process of 'motion of the notion', landing and adapting themselves'...²³

The leaders of various African states also called for the release of Mandela during the early 1960s. The Prime Minister of Tanganyika, Rashidi Kawawa and President of Sudan, Ibrahim Abboud, were among African leaders who called for the release of Mandela. In a statement demanding the withdrawal of the case against Mandela, the president of Sudan announced that he had instructed his representatives at the UN to raise the question of Mandela's arrest for discussion. Kawawa, as a senior member of the ruling Tanganyika African Union (TANU) asserted; 'I want to make it abundantly clear to the whole world that the members of TANU are most perturbed by the news of the arrest of Mandela whom we have known as a fellow freedom fighter'.²⁴ Kawawa further avowed:

The urge to be free from the fetters of imperialism and injustice of all kinds is human. No threats, no persecutions and no pretences will stop the people

21 'More Cape Town slogans', *New age*, 30 August, 1962.

22 *New Age*, 6 September, 1962.

23 A. Bogues, "'We are an African People'", *Anti-colonial Internationalism and Black Internationalism: Caribbean and African Solidarities*, in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 5, African Solidarity, Part 1* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2013), 126; B. Peterson, "'The ties that bind': Weaving continental and international cultural fraternities" in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 5, African Solidarity, Part 1*, chapter 19.

24 'African states call for the release of Mandela', *New Age*, 23 August, 1962.

from demanding their rights to choose the form of government they want. Mandela's activities as we know them in TANU have been nothing more than a demand for what is rightly his people. The Africans of South Africa want freedom. The South African government will therefore be advised to release Nelson Mandela and begin to take him for what he is- a man with genuine political aspirations for his fellow men in South Africa. Mandela's aspirations are noble and humanitarian, and all cannot fail to own up to this fact.²⁵

The President of Somali Republic, Aden Abdulla Osman forwarded an appeal to U. Thant, the Acting Secretary General of the UN, to 'use his good office to obtain immediate release of this African patriot... [persecuted by] the determination of the Verwoerd government ruthlessly suppress and annihilate any person advocating the dignity and equality of man as contained in the Charter of the United Nations'.²⁶ As stated in the introduction of this chapter, in July 1963, the exiled liberation movement, through its delegation consisting of Duma Nokwe, Robert Resha and Tennyson Makiwane, proposed to the UN Special Committee against Apartheid to adopt a resolution which specifically focused on the release of political prisoners. These were the first shots fired in this regard. Noting the political impact made by his colleagues, Tambo, during his address to the Special Committee against Apartheid on 12 March 1964, elaborated the following salient point about the UN resolution passed in October 1963:

In response to the appeals made in the name of our people, when our delegation appeared before your Committee last year,, we are grateful, Mr chairman, to note that both the Security Council and the General Assembly have adopted resolutions imposing an embargo on the supply of arms to South Africa and calling for the release of all peoples detained or otherwise restricted because of their opposition to the policies of apartheid. It is common knowledge, however, that the south African government has completely, and openly, ignored these resolutions. The behaviour of this member state of the United Nations in persistently flouting well-considered decisions of this world body calls for immediate investigation.²⁷

Nelson Mandela and fellow prisoners at Robben Island also challenged the apartheid regime and they joined exiled counterparts and the international solidarity movement when they called for the release of all political prisoners. Mandela declared that the apartheid regime regarded its prisoners as institutions with which to 'cripple us, so that we should never again have strength and courage to pursue our ideals'. This is reflected in a letter written by Mandela on 22 April 1969. It was addressed to the Minister

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 'O. Tambo, 'Accomplices of apartheid' in A. Tambo (ed.), *Oliver Tambo Speaks* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2014), 102

of Justice and its main message was 'release us or treat us as political prisoners'.²⁸ Mandela informed the minister that they were convicted and sentenced for political activities which they embarked upon as part and parcel of the oppressed African majority in South Africa. According to him these activities were inspired by the desire to resist racial policies and unjust laws violating the principle of human rights and fundamental freedoms that form the foundation of democratic government. He noted that in the past, various white minority governments of South Africa treated persons found guilty of offences of similar nature as political offenders who were released from prison, long before their sentences expired. In this regard Mandela referred the Minister of Justice to the cases of Generals Christiaan de Wet, J.C.C. Kemp and others who were charged with high treason arising out of the 1914 Afrikaner rebellion.²⁹ He was of the view that their case was in every respect more serious compared to theirs because more than twelve thousand white rebels took to arms and there were no less than 322 casualties. Towns were occupied and considerable damage was caused to government installations. These acts of violence were committed by white men who enjoyed full political rights, who belonged to political parties that were legal, they had freedom to express their views and garner support throughout the country by holding political meetings. They had no justification whatsoever to resort to violence.³⁰

In spite of gravity of their offences, de Wet was released within six months of his conviction and sentence, and the rest within a year. But fifty four years later, the government of the day was intransigent when dealing with black political prisoners who had even more justification to resort to violence than the 1914 rebels who wanted to re-establish the old Afrikaner Republics. Mandela argued that if they had to use de Wet's case as standard, 'then every one of us ought to have been released by now'. There were 322 casualties during the 1914 rebellion. By way of contrast, they draw attention to the fact that in committing acts of sabotage they took special precautions to avoid loss of life, a fact which was expressly acknowledged by both trial judge and the prosecution during the Rivonia case.

Furthermore, another case which justified the release of political prisoners incarcerated at Robben Island was that of Robey Leibrandt, Holm, Pienaar, Strauss and others. Leibrandt, a national of the Union of South Africa, arrived in the Union from Nazi Germany during the 2nd World War and proceeded to set up a paramilitary underground organisation with the purpose of overthrowing the government and establishing in place one modelled on that of Nazi Germany. He was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment, Holm, Pienaar and Strauss were also imprisoned for high treason, it being alleged that they collaborated with the enemy in prosecuting the war against the Union and its allies.

28 'Letter from Mandela', *Sechaba*, Fourth Quarter, Vol. 12, 1978; 22-27; N. Mandela, "release us or treat us as political prisoners" in S. Johns and R. Hunt-Davies, *Mandela and Tambo and the African National Congress: The Struggle Against Apartheid, 1948-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 145.

29 On the Afrikaner rebellion see B. Bunting, *The Rise of the South African Reich*, (London: IDAF Reprints, 1986).

30 N. Mandela, "release us or treat us as political prisoners"; 'Letter from Mandela', *Sechaba*.

³¹ On coming to power in 1948, the Nationalist government released these political prisoners and other prisoners sentenced for treason and sabotage, notwithstanding the fact that they had been arrested in circumstances which made them appear to many South Africans as traitors to their own country. Again, by way of contrast, Mandela drew attention to the fact that that their activities were at all times actuated by the noblest ideals; namely the desire to serve the oppressed African majority in South Africa and free them from a government founded on injustice and inequality. In addition, Mandela noted that in 1966, the apartheid regime released anti-apartheid prisoners, Spike de Keller, Stephanie Kemp, Alan Brooks and Tony Trew, all of whom had originally appeared jointly with Edward Joseph Daniels and a charge of sabotage. Mandela referred to these episodes involving fellow political prisoners for the limited purpose of showing that the request addressed to the Minister of Justice was reasonable and also to stress that the South African government was expected to be consistent in its application of policies and accord the same treatment to its citizens.³² Nevertheless, Mandela's 1969 call for the release of all political prisoners was not heeded by the Minister of Justice and the apartheid regime.

During the 1970s the liberation movement increasingly profiled Mandela in *Sechaba* and some of their publications such as *Dawn* by publishing articles and photographs in various issues of the journal. This was done in order to keep Mandela's public memory and intellectual views alive. In January 1971, *Sechaba* published an interview conducted with Denis Healey, the former British Labour Minister of Defence who had visited Mandela at Robben Island. This unusual visit was allowed in order to implement the regime's propaganda strategies and reassure the apartheid regime's critics that political prisoners were treated with compassion. The *Sechaba* interviewer also asked Healey to explain his position on the sale of arms to South Africa by western powers. This is because when he was the Minister of Defence in Britain, Healey was against sanctions and did not support the arms embargo spearheaded by the world-wide anti-apartheid movement. He was also responsible for safeguarding the Simonstown agreement and supported the sales of arms to the apartheid regime.³³ He elaborated the following about his Robben Island visit:

My visit to Robben Island? Yes I had about an hour talking to Nelson Mandela in the Governor's office in the presence of the Prison Commandant and Deputy Commissioner of Prisons and the British Ambassador, so that inevitably our conversation was slightly circumscribed. But having known Nelson Mandela nine years ago when he was in exilehe was completely confident of the victory of his cause ...I could not help feeling that the obvious respect in which he was held by his gaolers owed a little to the

31 B. Bunting, *The Rise of the South African Reich*.

32 N. Mandela, "release us or treat us as political prisoners"; 'Letter from Mandela', *Sechaba*.

33 'Nelson Mandela is confident of victory- says Denis Healey', *Sechaba*, Vol. 5, No 1, January 1971, 14.

possibility that he might, like so many in prison before him, go from prison to the Presidency.³⁴

The South African government's propaganda strategy was also part of its diplomatic thrust focussing on the African continent. It was referred to as 'outward looking policy' during the early 1970s. It was about the possibility of John Vorster's government holding dialogue with African states such as Ivory Coast, Ghana, Zambia, Liberia, Malagasy, Mauritius, Swaziland, Botswana, Upper Volta, Niger and Dahomey. In response, the liberation movement published an article in *Sechaba* entitled 'What Nelson Mandela said about dialogue'. These germane issues are discussed in chapter 12 of Volume 2 of this multi-volume series, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. The *Sechaba* piece published in May 1971 regurgitated what Mandela said in October 1962 when he appeared in court in Pretoria and made a historic statement about dialogue. He believed that if there was to be dialogue it must be between South Africans alone. According to the liberation movement, if African states wanted to be helpful, the best advice offered by the ANC was for their leaders such as Houphouet Boigny of the Ivory Coast to champion the call for the release of all political prisoners in South Africa- including other leaders. This would make it possible for the South African government to negotiate with authentic African leaders in South Africa.³⁵

In order to mark the 10th anniversary of the arrest at Rivonia, on the 11th of July 1973, O.R Tambo addressed a press conference in Addis Ababa. It was organised by the OAU. In his address the president of the ANC called for the release of all prisoners of apartheid including those he referred to as men of calibre, namely, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and Ahmed Kathrada. He also elaborated the fact that many others, trade unionist like Bill Nair, Raymond Mhlaba, and Bram Fischer, writers, professors, housewives, miners and artisans have been victimised for their unreserved opposition to apartheid. Cases of torture and deaths in South African prisons were well documented as are inhuman conditions in which detainees were held. Furthermore, Tambo called for a world-wide campaign that involved the international community because it had a specific responsibility to fight for the rights of these prisoners victimised for upholding the very principles aspirations and rights embodied in the United Nations Charter and Declarations of Human Rights. Not only had the South African government no authority to imprison and restrict political prisoners under house arrest but by doing so the state showcased its contempt for the international community and its ideals. This contempt was aggravated and compounded by the detention of Namibians in South Africa and also by the imprisonment of South African freedom fighters in Zimbabwe. Tambo was of the view that it was because of the failure of the international community to take

34 Ibid,

35 'What Mandela said about dialogue', *Sechaba*, Vol. 5, No. 5, May 1971, 6.

decisive action that the South African government was able to continue to exact the price for those who seek freedom from the yoke of oppression by a racist regime.³⁶

The liberation movement used both the aural and visual strategies in order to promote Mandela as the public face of the organisation. The October /Nov/ Dec 1973 issue of *Sechaba* published a graphically designed photograph of Mandela as its front cover. I am of the view that this was done to preserve, promote and keep us conscious of the public memory of Mandela. The creative graphic designer was spot on because the final product which bears a canny resemblance to Mandela (imagined beard and all) is impressive. The artist had to use his or her imagination since any image or photograph of Mandela was banned and we had not seen Mandela in public for a number of years. The title of the cover is 'FREE NELSON MANDELA and all Political Prisoners of Apartheid'. This volume also included a photograph of both Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, having a conversation at 'their' workstations/quarry at Robben Island with guards looking on. This was one of the few photographs available and published in some books. But it was against the law in South Africa to publish such photographs.³⁷ Also, in 1973, the efforts to keep the public memory about Mandela entered the scientific field as nuclear physics scientists honoured both Winnie and Nelson Mandela. Three physicists at Leeds University, Dr Walter Kelerman, Dr Gordon Brooke and John Baruch discovered a new nuclear particle and named it after the Mandelas. These scientists also collaborated with physicists from the Lebedev Institute of the Academy of Science of the USSR and from Moscow State University who indicated support for the finding of their Leeds based colleagues.³⁸ Also, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was the honorary vice-president of the Leeds University Students' Union-this was also extended to other universities in the United Kingdom.

In order to keep the issue of political prisoners as part of its agenda, the UN established the United Nations Apartheid Committee on Political Prisoners in South Africa. This was done in 1974, one year after the UN had declared apartheid as crime against humanity in 1973. This committee commemorated the decade of imprisonment of political prisoners by issuing a statement that proclaimed that nowhere else but in South Africa is there a government policy committed to the goal of a society based on human inequality on the grounds of race and colour. Only in South Africa is racial discrimination written into the very fabric of the constitution and law. The UN committee also noted that ten years had since passed since adoption of resolution 1881 (XVII) which called for the unconditional release of all political prisoners in accordance to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights. The UN recognised political prisoners as genuine leaders of the oppressed African majority in South Africa. They were imprisoned

36 'Prisoners of apartheid', *Sechaba*, Volume 7, No 9, September 1973; 4; 'The Pretoria Six: prisoners of apartheid', *Sechaba*, Volume 7, No 9, September 1973; 2.

37 *Sechaba*, Vol. 7, No 10/11/12, 1973.

38 'The Mandela Particle', *Sechaba*, I Vol. 7, No. 8, 1973, 21; 'Support for the Mandela Particle', *Sechaba*, Vol. 4, No 4, 1974, 8.

because they had courage to struggle for the legitimate aspirations of their people and were fighters for the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, the UN committee called on world public opinion to keep alive the noble cause of the prisoners which indeed was a cause of all humanity. The UN statement referred to Mandela as an outstanding leader of his people for three decades and the first accused in the Rivonia trial.³⁹

The 1974 report of the ANC's Sub-Committee for the Release of All Political Prisoners, noted that the liberation movement's efforts had so far yielded no results, nor had the campaign calling for the release of political prisoners resulted in any public reaction by the apartheid regime.⁴⁰ Not a single prisoner linked to the Rivonia trial had been released. On the contrary, the technique of suppression and restriction continued to be applied with vigour. On two or three occasions, some leaders of the Bantustans and other organisations expressed concerns at the continued detention of political prisoners such as Mandela, Sisulu and others. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi the leader of the KwaZulu Bantustan had also pointed out he discussed the matter with John Vorster, the prime minister. Protesting students in Johannesburg and Cape Town had also called for the release of political prisoners. The ANC's sub-committee acknowledged that international solidarity for the release of political prisoners had grown immensely. It noted that a number of popular organisations and anti-apartheid groups, the OAU and UN had taken up the campaign and as a result the people of the world have, through these organisations, made numerous calls and statements, passed resolutions and organised petitions, calling on the government of South Africa to release all those banned, restricted and imprisoned because of their opposition to apartheid.

To commemorate the decade since the leaders of the liberation movement had been incarcerated at Robben Island, the sub-committee also planned a 'world-wide week of action against apartheid' to take place on 10-17 December 1974. Radio freedom ran special features on political prisoners during and before the week of action. The sub-committee also appealed to the Africa department of Radio Berlin International to advertise the campaign and to appeal to Radio Berlin International listeners' clubs throughout the world to promote the campaign and this was done. In addition the ANC sub-committee for the Release of All Political Prisoners felt that time was overdue for a convention on political prisoners. This should be done in order to arouse great enthusiasm and furthermore, propaganda materials should be developed in order to promote such a convention. For example, the liberation movement should produce stickers and banners with slogans such as; 'Mandela Speaks for Us; 'South Africa Belongs to Us- Bantustans Are A Fraud' and anti-apartheid organisations, including international solidarity movements, were encouraged to produce a range of

39 'A decade in prison', *Sechaba*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1974, 4.

40 Political prisoners included women prisoners held at Kroonstad and Barberton prisons. See 'Barberton women's prison', *Sechaba*, Vol. 8, 1974, 34-35; C.K. Mokhoere, *No child's play: In prison under apartheid* (London: Women's Press, 1988).

badges, posters and banners with pictures and names of political prisoners for use at meetings which they hosted.⁴¹ These materials are presently stored at various archives of the international solidarity movements in the US, Britain and Sweden to name but a few countries.

In response, the apartheid regime perfected the machinery which turned South Africa into a huge concentration camp. Over and above the four main security laws; the Terrorism Act, internal Security Act, Unlawful Organisations Act and Sabotage Act; the state unleashed the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977 that allowed for the summary trial and imprisonment of hundreds of young militant activists. Under this legislation, the accused, in most cases undefended, was expected to plead guilty at a preliminary hearing before a magistrate. Having undergone brutal torture and forced signing of a false statement, the state did not have to prove its case against the accused if the latter pleaded guilty. The result of this infamous 'law' was clear. In May 1978 Zolile Msenge was convicted of setting fire to two schools which were five kilometres apart and what was perplexed everybody was that it was claimed he burnt the school at the same time, on the same day which is impossible. The Judge refused to let Msenge change his original plea which he signed under duress- after being tortured and forced to sign a false statement by his captors. He was sentenced to ten years imprisonment. The number of political prisoners continued to grow. From 1 July 1978 to 31 May 1979, forty-six people were sentenced to a total of 378 years imprisonment. This raised the number of political prisoners to 550, about 30 of these prisoners being SWAPO leaders incarcerated at Robben Island. About 447 political prisoners suffered the brutal conditions at Robben Island, 9 of these political prisoners were under the age of 18 years old. The rest of the political prisoners were women incarcerated at Kroonstad prison and in Pretoria, where a special maximum-security section was built to house white male political prisoners.⁴²

In their attempt to break the spirit and strength of political prisoners, the apartheid regime isolated them from the outside world-severely restricting visits to them and access to news. Prisoners were graded from A to D- grades which determined their diet, clothing, visits, permission to receive correspondence, that is, letters. Political prisoners were automatically allocated the D grade. Divide and rule tactics were applied inside the prisons and prisoners at Robben Island fought relentlessly for the same diet and clothing to be given to them irrespective of the colour of their skin. And these divide and rule tactics went further, old political prisoners were divided from the young; those regarded as militant were also divided from the leadership. The most serious attack against political prisoners came about in November 1977 with the announcement that they would no longer be allowed to pursue studies above high school level (matric). This was not only aimed at the older prisoners for whom study which led to them attaining educational qualifications provided an invaluable outlet from the rigours and deprivations of prison life- over 240 political prisoners at

41 'Campaign for the release of political prisoners', *Sechaba*, Vol. 8, 1974, 26. See also, 'Barberton women's prison', *Sechaba*, Vol. 8.

42 'Release all SA Political prisoners', *Sechaba*, October 1979, 26.

Robben Island were registered as high school pupils, 87 political prisoners enrolled for degree courses at university usually offered via correspondence by the University of South Africa. At least 62 passed their exams while a further 211 prisoners were involved in studies from primary school to university level when the new regulation came into effect. Also, the Prison Act of 1959 stated that permission to sue a library or study was 'subject to the discretion of the Commissioner of Prisons' and further that 'the provisions of the said regulation may in no way be so construed as implying that such permission...allows any prisoner a right which he can legally claim'. The racist 1977 legislation barring political prisoners to continue with post-matric studies, provided the liberation movement and the world-wide anti-apartheid movement a new focus for action: to demand full-reinstatement of access to higher education as a fundamental human and social right. Inside South Africa a national campaign was launched around the call for legal right to study whilst incarcerated in prison.⁴³

There were also other political prisoners which were serving sentence in Rhodesia's maximum-security prison. They were members of the ANC and were captured in the Wankie and Kariba area of north-western Rhodesia during the joint ZAPU-ANC operation.⁴⁴ Political prisoners incarcerated at Khami were kept in 2 three storey buildings behind 2 wire security fences and two wall, 17 and 15 feet high, topped with watchtowers manned by troops armed with machine guns and rifles. Only one ANC prisoner was known to have received visits from relatives- the rest were completely isolated from the outside world for ten years. They were not allowed to study since 1974. The following MK cadres were incarcerated at Rhodesia's Khami prison; Ralph Mzamo, Isaac Maphotho, Nelson Linda, George Tau, Johannes Nkosi, Osborne Bophela, James Hermans, Mosses bared, David Molefe, Ernest Modulu, Matsobane Ramashaba and Bothwell Ndlovu. Also, 3 MK cadres had passed away in Khami. They were Reggie Hlatshwayo who passed away in 1976, Aubrey Mdletshe who died in 1977 and George Mthusi who perished in 1978.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, the liberation movement continued to promote Mandela's public memory through its publications. As an example, Mandela's visual image was again used on the cover of *Sechaba*, Vol. 12, 1978. It was one of his famous photographs where he wore African traditional attire and beads. He wore this attire in one of his trials during the early 1960s. The title of this issue is 'The ANC Salutes You' and is printed above Mandela's cover photograph and to a large extent proclaims the point that the liberation movement recognised the imprisoned leader as the public face of

43 Ibid, 27-28; See also N. Solani and N. Nieftagodien, 'Political imprisonment and resistance in South Africa: The case of Robben Island, 1960-1970' in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1*, chapter 10; International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF), *South Africa: The Imprisoned Society* (London: IDAF, 1985); M. Dlamini, *Hell-Hole Robben Island: Reminiscences of a Political Prisoner* (Nottingham: Africa World Press, 1998); F. Buntman, *Robben Island and prisoner resistance to apartheid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: the Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (London: Abacus, 1995); C.K. Mokhoere, *No child's play*.

44 On this joint military campaign see R.M. Ralinala, J. Sithole, G. Houston and B. Magubane, 'The Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1*, chapter 12.

45 'Release all SA Political prisoners', *Sechaba*, October 1979, 29; 'Report from Khami', *Sechaba*, Vol 11, Second Quarter, 1977, 21.

the liberation movement. The editorial is entitled 'Nelson Mandela 60 years Old' and two other articles in this volume focus on Mandela and other political prisoners. These articles were entitled 'Nelson Mandela and our revolution' and 'Life on Robben Island'. The opening line of the editorial states that 'Nelson grew up to be a living embodiment of the ideas and aspirations of the black people'. The editorial addressed the following questions, why has Mandela's name captured the minds of our people? What has made him to be revered and so respected by the Blacks and hated and feared by the white racists? Surely, it was not because of his royal background because Kaizer Matanzima, his cousin, as the leader of the Transkei Bantustan was despised and hated by Africans. The article pointed out that 'Nelson Mandela is a noble son of our people'. He was a leader of 'all genuine revolutionary forces in South Africa, black and white'. By the time he was arrested in 1962, he had become a legendary figure in South Africa and abroad. Further claims were articulated including the fact that 'Nelson Mandela's political development is characteristic of many young Africans in our country'. He left the rural areas and found himself in Johannesburg where he later developed to become one of the outstanding leaders of the oppressed African majority.⁴⁶ Together with his colleagues, Sisulu, Tambo and others founded the ANC Youth League. He therefore:

contributed tremendously in modernising the ANC of those days, bringing about organisational reforms, articulating a revolutionary philosophy and working out the revolutionary strategy and tactics of our movement. There is not a single campaign or revolutionary activity of our masses in which Nelson Mandela did not participate. He was arrested, house arrested, imprisoned and banned. But he did not lose vision.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the editorial piece espoused the view that Mandela was no mere theorist for he always put his theories into practice. This was all more important because the future of both the ANC and the revolution in South Africa did not depend on abstract hopes and wishes; 'our wishes ideals and aspirations will become reality as a result of our actions and thinking today and here'. In the article focusing on 'Mandela and our revolution', the author highlighted the importance of African solidarity, a broad theme which is covered in Volume 5 of this multi-volume series. The article noted that Mandela's trip into the African continent during the early 1960s was an eye-opener to him in many ways. This was confirmed by Mandela who observed 'the tour to the continent made a forceful impression to me', He met Julius Nyerere, Haile Selassie, Modibo Keita, Ben Bella, Oginga Odinga, Kenneth Kaunda, Joshua Nkomo and many others. As a result, he exchanged revolutionary ideas and experiences with these leaders. These ideas could be summarised as follows; in apartheid South Africa as elsewhere in the former colonial world the national question is the question of decolonisation whose main content is the national liberation of the oppressed African

46 'Mandela- 60 years old', *Sechaba*, Vol. 12, Third Quarter, 1978, 1.

47 *Ibid.*

majority. To state that the South African revolution is not socialist but democratic with a national content, is to emphasise the fact that the South African revolution is an aspect and integral part of the African revolution. But the African revolution is not a homogenous process. There are national specifics which could not be ignored, for example, the relatively developed industry and technology in South Africa led to the existence of a strong working class whose leadership was accepted by the both the liberation movement and the South African Communist Party. These factors emphasised the fact that genuine liberation could be obtained on the basis of destruction of monopoly capitalism in apartheid South Africa.⁴⁸ Therefore by publishing articles the liberation movement consolidated the fact that Mandela was also an intellectual giant and theoretician who was well-versed in political theory which he put into practice.

The liberation movement also received various letters of support and poems from readers dispersed all over the world. One of the poems, dedicated to Nelson Mandela and titled 'Dialogue with a black political prisoner' was submitted by James Berry who was born in Jamaica but lived in England. It was published in *Sechaba*. Some of the poem's stanzas read as follow:

In my mind I visit you here
 In walls within walls.
 Caring stirred your long
 Crucifixion I look
 At you I listen
 I speak as if
 to no one...
 I am here a second night
 To see you, momentous man.
 You breathed breath of Bambatha
 and Dingane, Makana and Hintsa,
 Dalasile and Mzilikazi,
 Sekhukhuni and Moshoeshoe,
 You grew guarded by the chief.
 A people's voice waited on your tongue
 I will hear the words
 of inarticulate silences.
 You answer...
 ...I too am voiceless
 my stream of mind sealed
 and drained. My breath
 is boarded up. My muteness
 keeps a State secure...⁴⁹

48 Ibid.

49 'Dialogue with a black political prisoner', *Sechaba*, Third Quarter, 1978, 60.

Deaths in detention

One of the many reasons that led to the liberation movements and the world-wide international solidarity movement to champion the release of all political prisoners was that they died in droves whilst in detention. The killing of a single political prisoner whilst in detention was unacceptable to all democrats who fought for the freedom of the oppressed in South Africa. In apartheid South Africa, detention without trial, that very useful weapon employed by the apartheid state to effectively silence opposition and removes key leaders from the political spectrum, still remains one of the very real topical issues in the present as we try to come to terms with the past. By 1990 seventy-three people had died in police detention since the practice was introduced into permanent legislation of the country in 1963. There had been deaths in detention during each year since 1963 with the exceptions of 1970, 1972 to 1975, 1979 and 1989. During the 1960s there was a period of six years in which there was regular occurrence of two deaths a year. The figures jumped to seven in 1969 and after the much-publicized death of Ahmed Timol in 1971, there followed a period of four years when there were no deaths in detention. Death in detention had occurred in virtually all of the main centres where security police are located but also in small towns and some rural areas where security police also operated. Certain interrogation centres have gained a reputation above others for being the sites of an unusual number of deaths these are:

- John Vorster Square-seven deaths
- Pretoria Prison- five deaths
- Sanlam Building in Port Elizabeth- four
- Johannesburg Fort- four deaths

There were fourteen deaths in Johannesburg, ten in Pretoria and three at Modderbee Prison. Security Laws under which deaths occurred:

- Transkei Proclamation R400
- Riotous Assemblies Act No 17 of 1956
- Terrorism Act No 83 of 1967
- General Law Amendment Act No 37 of 1963
- Criminal Procedure Act No 51 of 1977
- Transkei Public Security Act No 30 of 1977
- Internal Security Act No 74 of 1982
- Section 26 of the Ciskei National Security Act No 13 of 1982
- Section 25 (1) and 26 (1) of the Bophuthatswana Internal Security Act No 22 of 1979

It was the Soweto uprising of 1976 which saw two years in which twenty-six people died in detention culminating in the death of Steve Biko. This resulted in a world outcry followed by an almost instantaneous halt in 'the procession of deaths' for a while. During the 1980s the figures slowly started creeping up again during the states of emergency of 1985 to 1990, a total of fourteen deaths were recorded. The youngest person that has died in detention was Dumisani Mbatha at the age of 16 while the oldest was Ah Yan at the age of 63. Eight detainees were 20 years old or younger. Twenty-one were between the ages of 21 and 30, eight were between the age of 31 and 40, and eleven were between the ages 41 and 59, and five 60 or older. The ages of twenty detainees are unknown. A remarkable twenty-eight of these deaths occurred within the first five days of detention and seventeenth of them within one day. Inquest courts found that death was due to suicide in thirty-three cases, twenty-six of them by hanging and five from jumping from buildings. In twenty-one cases the cause of death was officially given as 'natural causes', four died by 'accidentally falling' from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square 'when trying to escape' and others by 'falling against a wall', by 'falling from a police Casspir', and by 'falling against a chair'. Other causes are 'slipping on a piece of soap'; 'heart trouble caused by a fall', 'haemorrhage after hitting head against desk during interrogation', having 'fits'.⁵⁰

Apart from deaths which have occurred in detention without trial under security legislation or emergency regulations, a substantial number died while in the custody of the police either under a specific charge or unspecified powers, but clearly in a politically related context such as the unrest related situations prevalent since 1984. The vast majority of these deaths had occurred during or have been attributed to police actions during arrest or subsequent interrogations within a few hours or a few days. With Nobandla Bani being the only woman the rest of the deaths in detention have been males. Victims have been from all walks of life and all sectors of the community and include students, trade unionists, church workers and teachers, doctors and political activists. I will discuss a few case studies below.

One of the first activists to die in detention was 'Looksmart' Solwandle Ngudle a 35-year-old Cape Town detainee. He was detained for alleged ANC activities. He was found hanging from the cord of pyjama trousers and a jersey, in the Pretoria North police cells on 5 September 1963. The first official statement about Ngudle's death was issued by General J.M Kevvy, then Commissioner of Police, on 24 September 1963. In October 1963, when the inquest started before Mr R.T.A Muller, an official representing the state. Dr George Lowen, Q.C., the advocate representing Mrs Beauty Ngudle, protested against the 'mysterious' acts of officials:

50 This is section is based on a research report which I authored for the Steve Biko Foundation. It led to the publication of an exhibition catalogue on Steve Biko published by the National Department of Education. The exhibition has a permanent home at the Steve Biko Centre, Ginsburg, King Williams Town. See *Biko, the quest for a true humanity: An exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of the death of Bantu Stephen Biko* (Pretoria and Johannesburg: Department of Education, Steve Biko Foundation and Apartheid Museum, 2007); Sechaba, First Quarter 1978; *Sechaba*, July 1985.

- Information of Ngudle's death was only given to his widow 10 days after the date on which he was said to have died
- Mr Ngudle was buried without any members of his family being present. The authorities, said Dr Lowen, claimed he was buried at the request of the widow. The widow denied this claim.
- When Mrs Ngudle's lawyer sought an urgent inquest, he was told it could not be held before 23 October, then this was changed to 31 October. But on 17 October, the lawyer was told that on the instructions of unidentified 'higher authority', the inquest would be held either on the following day or three days later. Dr Lowen then referred to a report, drawn up by another advocate, in which allegations of severe torture of detainees were made by an awaiting-trial prisoner who had been quite definite that Mr Ngudle had died as a result of torture and not of suicidal hanging. 'We have every reason to think that he dies because of something else. Mr V. Marinus, the State prosecutor, said Dr Lowen had thrown suspicion on the activities of the police, who had nothing to hide or fear. Mr Ngudle would have been charged with sabotage and had incriminated former comrades in his statements. He had found himself facing death by been the only way out.

In the ten days between this hearing and the next one, Mr Ngudle became the first dead person to be banned. Dr Lowen withdrew from the proceedings, saying that the posthumous banning order made it impossible to publish any statement made by Mr Ngudle during his life. Witnesses he wanted to call were also banned. After his withdrawal, a district surgeon, Dr C.J.N Laubser, said in evidence that he was absolutely satisfied that Mr Ngudle had hanged himself. He found no other injuries. At the third hearing- after the Department of Justice had authorised the use of statements by banned persons at the inquest- Mr Ngudle was represented by another Q.C., Mr Vernon Berrange who questioned a security policeman who denied that Ngudle had been tortured to make him speak. Berrange said he would bring twenty witnesses who would say they had been subjected to gross brutalities. He called in former detainee, Isaac Tlale, who said he had been given electric shock treatment and had seen Ngudle at the Central police station in Pretoria. Tlale said Ngudle was sweating, the veins on his neck were 'green' and he could see he suffered severe pain. Mr Berrange said he would call another witness to testify that he 'went of his head' and had to be restrained in a strait jacket after electric shock torture. At a later hearing, when Mr Ngudle's legal representative sought to lead further evidence on this issue, the magistrate questioned its relevancy. He noted "I want to make it clear that this is not an investigation into the detention of 90-day detainees'.. Mr Berrange argued that it was necessary, in the interest of justice, to call certain witnesses whose evidence, if true, would establish a 'system, a technique of torture, used by certain members of the Security Branch, to extract information...'. When the magistrate viewed this irrelevant, Mr Berrange in turn withdrew from the hearing. The purpose of the evidence would have been to show that the only inference to which the court

could come was that Ngudle had taken his life as a result of the treatment to which he was subjected, said Mr Berrange.

After the second withdrawal, a Pretoria magistrate, Mr J.J. Marais, who had visited Ngudle three times, told the court that on third occasion Ngudle complained of having been assaulted and of having coughed up blood. He did not specify the nature of the assault, said Mr Marais. He did not see any marks on Ngudle. He had reported the complaint to the police and the next morning had of Ngudle's death. The finding: That Ngudle had hanged himself; that his death was not the result of any act or omission amounting to an offence on the part of the person .

Suliman Saloojee, a 32-year-old Indian attorney clerk, fell 60ft. to his death from a seventh-floor office in his office at The Grays, then the Security Police headquarters in Johannesburg, where he was being interrogated on 9 September 1964. Mr Saloojee had been detained under the 90-day clause for about two months at the time of his death. His widow, Mrs Rookie Saloojee, said at the inquest that he had been a very happy man who had disapproved of suicide. When she had seen him about two weeks before his death he had seemed normal and unworried, she said. Captain Theunis Jacobus Swanepoel, a senior officer of the Security Police interrogation section at the Grays, told the inquest hearing that he had questioned Mr Saloojee on 9 September but was out of the room at the time of his death. Swanepoel was involved in some heated exchanges with Dr George Lowen Q.C., who appeared for Mrs Saloojee. When questioned on the possible effects of 90-day detention on the mind of the person, he suddenly burst out: 'I am not prepared to stand out here and allow you or anyone else to make propaganda'. Dr Lowen replied sharply: 'I am not here to make propaganda. We are here to find out why a man who was apparently normal should jump from a seventh-floor window. It is not an everyday occurrence'. Swanepoel denied that any violence was used in the interrogation of detainees. He did not think the interrogation methods used by the Security Police had any detrimental effects on a person. Later Dr Lowen asked: 'You were once involved in complaints of ill-treatment when a man's arm was broken?' but Swanepoel replied that he was exonerated by the judge in the case. In addition, he said he did not at any time assault Saloojee. Also, Mr Saloojee had already made a statement when he was detained. The aim of the questioning was to obtain more information. Captain Swanepoel refused to answer a number of Dr Lowen's questions. For example, would not reveal how long was Saloojee had been interrogated before his death, or the methods used to extract information from 90-day detainees. Another policeman, Detective Sergeant Johan van Zyl said while questioned at The Grays, on 9 September 1964, Saloojee had suddenly sprung to the window and said, "Goodbye Sir". He tried to hold Mr Saloojee, but failed because Saloojee kicked against the wall and fell to a concrete parapet above the ground floor. Sergeant van Zyl said no unlawful methods had been used in the interrogation. He thought Saloojee might have believed he could escape, possibly by climbing down the building. Lt Gert Janse van Rensburg told the court he had heard another officer ask the dying Saloojee "You fool why did you do it?" after the fall. Saloojee had twice repeated "foolish, tried to escape" in English and then

said more in a foreign language. The magistrate, Mr A.J. Kotze, found that Saloojee died of multiple injuries suffered in a fall while he was being interrogated. He was not prepared to make a finding as to whether Saloojee had committed suicide or was trying to escape. Nothing in the evidence, Kotze said, suggested that Saloojee had been assaulted or that the methods of interrogation him were in any way irregular. No one was blamed for the death.

Mlungisi Tshazibane a 30-year-old engineer trained at Oxford University, died hours after he was detained. He was arrested on 10 December 1976 at Rand Airport in Germiston as he was returning from a business trip in Botswana. Mr Tshazibane, a design engineer, at the time of his death was doing a doctorate the thesis for which was to be presented in May 1977. He had been detained under section six of the terrorism Act. He died on 11 December 1976 hanging by his neck from the bars in his cell. A strip of torn blanket was found round his neck and portions of it were tied to the bars. Lt Johannes de Waal of the Security Police told the inquest court that he arrested Mr Tshazibane on 10 December in connection with a murder in Soweto. Tshazibane arrest followed the Carlton hotel blast in which a young man, Isaac Seke, lost his hand. He was taken to John Vorster Square where he admitted he had been involved in sabotage acts after being interrogated. Later he accompanied security police to his Soweto house which was searched. An electronic detonator and explosive chemicals were found. He was taken back to John Vorster and agreed to make a statement before a magistrate but needed time to think about it. He was given pen and notebook and taken to the cells, Lt. de Waal said. He visited Mr Tshazibane later that evening and he had no complaints. At 5.15 am next morning his body was found. De Waal handed in photographs of Mr Tshazibane's body to the court showing cuts on both wrists, believed to have been caused by a broken cologne bottle found in the cell. Mr Tshazibane mother, Mrs Joyce Mavuso said they were all shocked when police came with him to search for documents. The police later came to tell us that he had hanged himself. I do not know what to say except that we will have our own doctor when a post- mortem is held'. Johannesburg's State pathologist, professor J.J. F. Taljaard, who performed the post-mortem, agreed to have a private pathologist, Dr J. Gluckman, in attendance. Details of the post-mortem conducted by Taljaard showed that there were other injuries apart from the bruise marks around the neck. The presiding magistrate at the inquest, Mr W.P. Dormehl, found that Mr Tshazibane had hanged himself with a piece of blanket tied to the bars of a cell at John Vorster Square.

Dr Naboath Ntshuntsha, a Soweto based homeopath, was 42 years old when he allegedly hanged himself on 8 January 1977 whilst in detention- held under the Terrorism Act. Dr Ntshuntsha of Emndeni township in Soweto was a member of the PAC. He had been arrested on 12 December and held in solitary confinement in Leandra in the Eastern Transvaal until his death. He died after being questioned for three days by the Springs Security Police. Constable A.S.P. van Vuuren told the inquest court he found Dr Ntshuntsha hanging behind his cell door on the morning of 9 January. The night before Dr Ntshuntsha had said he had no complaints as 'he

was in a genial mood', the constable said. Questioned by Mr E.M. Wentzel, who appeared on behalf of the family, Van Vuuren could not say why Dr Ntshunsha could have hanged himself if he was in a genial mood the previous night. A Johannesburg pathologist, Professor J.J.F. Taljaard, who also heads the Forensic Medicine Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, told the magistrate, Mr J.C. Maritz, he had examined the four-day old corpse on 12 January. The cause of death was hanging he said. 'The head had already been opened and there was an incision behind the ear. There was a 28 cm incision roughly stitched up, about seven cm below the navel. There was also a small abrasion between one and one and a half mm long near the left temple', the pathologist said. He also found abrasions on the ears and believed these marks could have been caused by electrical contact, burns or what the professor termed 'impression contact'. These marks were, however, not relevant to the man's death, Taljaard said. 'we are not entirely sure as to what caused these marks- I did not see enough evidence in these wounds to be able to say that they were caused electrically'. In addition there was a two cm mark on the front of the dead man's neck, stretching upwards on both sides of the ears.

An independent pathologist, Dr Jonathan Gluckman, commissioned by the family of the dead detainee, refused to perform the post mortem when he found that major incisions had already been made in the body. He said he was appalled to learn incisions had been carried out by the attendant, entirely on his own, without a doctor being present. He listed his reasons for declining to perform the autopsy as being:

- Any interference of such a nature might well have altered appearances in the regions of the incisions
- The top of the main incision was such as to make impossible the special dissection of the neck which is mandatory in cases of such nature
- He was in no position to know the exact nature of the incisions, not having been present when they were carried out

Dr Gluckman argued that any conclusion he might have drawn would have been based on features which might have been masked and would therefore be unreasonable. The distraught widow, Mrs Florence Ntshunsha told newspaper reporters that 'when the same two policemen who had first told me about my husband death came and told me to go and fetch his body at the Johannesburg mortuary, I did not know what to expect to find after reading all those press reports. When I saw him lying there, I could not believe that he had left me. I called out his name, Naboath, Naboath. But of course he could not reply. Somehow I am relieved that I have seen his body after worrying for the last three weeks. At least, he is now back home'. An Evander inquest magistrate found that no one was to blame for the death of Dr Ntshunsha. Mr C.J. Maritz, representing the state, said the cause of death was probably suicide. Mr Wentzel said he found the reasons for Dr Ntshunsha death inexplicable. He had been in good frame of mind the night he died and was co-operating with police. It had to be remembered that under the Terrorism Act's Section 6 the prisoner was

solely in custody of the police. No one had access to him and therefore the police were physically responsible for the mental and mental well-being of such a prisoner.

Bonaventura Siphon Malaza, an 18-year-old student at Mosupatsela Secondary School in Kagiso died whilst in detention in Krugersdorp on 7 November 1977. He was alleged to have hanged himself by using a belt in a Krugersdorp police cell. The dead man's brother, Mr William Bhekumuzi Malaza said his brother was taken away by security police on 1 July. They had said he was being taken for questioning and would be released later that day. The post-mortem into Malaza's death was held at the Government Mortuary in Johannesburg, Dr A Jaffe, a consultant pathologist, represented the Malaza family. Mrs Gertrude Malaza, Siphon's mother, said the police told her that he had hanged himself in his cell. Earlier the police had come to her house, but found no one there, she said. They left a note saying that Siphon was 'mad' in detention and that the family should come and fetch him. Later the security police fetched William, Siphon's brother, and showed him Siphon's body. The principal of Mosupatsela secondary School, Mr Ralph Mthimkhulu, said he was shattered at the news of Malaza's death, 'he was the most brilliant student I have come across. He came top of the class in the June examinations and I have no doubt he would have passed his Junior Certificate with a distinction', Mr Mthimkhulu said. An inquest hearing was told that on 16 November the Krugersdorp cells were searched twice. Constable Z Molese told the magistrate, Mr T Steenkamp, he found no belt on the detainee. The constable also said he had searched the cell for 'anything dangerous' and has taken away the man's toiletries. But Warrant Officer F. de Beer told the court he found Mr Malaza hanging by a belt in his cell. He had also found a toothbrush and toothpaste among Malaza's possessions. Earlier a doctor told the court he thought it 'strange but not inconsistent' that Mr Malaza had one arm folded across his chest. Professor Taljaard said it was possible the arm had been caught on a bar in front of Malaza. He also conceded that an injury on the dead man's lip may have been inflicted before he died. Prof Taljaard said he found the man's death was consistent with hanging.

Name*	Date of Death	Official explanation
Bellington Mampe	1 September 1963	cause undisclosed
'Looksmart' S Ngudle	5 September 1963	'suicide by hanging'
James Tyitya	24 January 1964	'suicide by hanging'
Suliman Saloojee	9 September 1964	'fell out of 7 th floor'
Nengeni Gaga	7 May 1965	'natural causes'
Pongoloshia Hoye	8 May 1965	'natural causes'
James Hamakwayo	10 October 1966	'natural causes'
Hangula Shoyeka	9 October 1966	'suicide'
Leong Yun Pin	19 November 1966	'suicide by hanging'

* See Biko, *the quest for a true humanity*; Sechaba, First Quarter 1978; Sechaba, July 1985.

Ah Yan	30 November 1966	'suicide by hanging'
Alpheus Maliba	9 September 1967	'suicide by hanging'
Ephraim Kaporo	12 October 1967	'natural causes'
J.B. Tubakwe	11 September 1968	'suicide by hanging'
Nichodimus Kgoathe	5 February 1969	'broncho-pneumonia following head injuries sustained in a shower'
Solomon Modipane	28 February 1969	'natural causes'
James Lenkoe	10 March 1969	'suicide by hanging'
Caleb Mayekiso	1 June 1969	'natural causes'
Michael SHivute	16 June 1969	'suicide'
Jacob Monakgotla	10 September 1969	'thrombosis'
Iman Abdullah Haron	27 September 1969	'fell down a flight of stairs'
Myatheli Mthayeni Cutshela	22 January 1971	'natural causes'
Ahmed Timol	27 October 1971	'fell out of 10 th floor window'
Joseph Mdluli	19 March 1973	'application of force to the neck'
William Tshwane	25 June 1976	'gunshot wound'
Mapetla Mohapi	15 July 1976	'suicide by hanging'
Luke Mazwembe	2 September 1976	'suicide by hanging'
Dumisani Mbatha	25 September 1976	'unknown illness'
Fenuel Megatusi	28 September 1976	'suffocation'
Jacob Mashabane	5 October 1976	'suicide by hanging'
Edward Mzolo	9 October 1976	'cause undisclosed'
Ernest Mamasila	18 November 1976	'suicide by hanging'
George Botha	15 December 1976	'fell 6 floors down stairwell'
Naboath Ntshutsha	9 January 1977	'suicide by hanging'
Lawrence Ndzanga	9 January 1977	'natural causes'
Elmon Malele	20 January 1977	'heart failure'
Mathews Mabelane	15 February 1977	'fell out of 10 th floor window'
Samuel Malinga	22 February 1977	'heart respiratory failure'
Aaron Khoza	26 March 1977	'suicide by hanging'
Phakamile Mabija	7 July 1977	'fell from 6 th floor window'
Elijah Loza	2 August 1977	'a stroke'

Hoosen Haffejee	3 August 1977	‘suicide by hanging’
Himathal Jamnadas	13 August 1977	‘suicide by drowning’
Bayempini Mzizi	15 August 1977	‘suicide by hanging’
Steve Biko	12 August 1977	‘hunger strike’

The 1980s: The Release Mandela Campaign

As was the case during the 1970s, *Sechaba* continued to publish feature articles specifically focussing on Mandela during the 1980s. As an example, in 1982 the liberation movement’s journal published a feature article on outstanding people’s leaders and Mandela was the chosen leader in this instance. It emphasised the point that a great impact on public thinking in South Africa was made by Mandela, whose influence on the minds of South Africans remained strong notwithstanding the fact that he was incarcerated in jail. Two years before, in 1980, on the 18th anniversary of his imprisonment which should have completely isolated him from the public at large, *The Sunday Post* emphasised ‘one of the realities which we have to face is that Nelson Mandela enjoys an incredibly high prestige’.⁵¹ The fact that the oppressed African majority, who rightfully consider Mandela as a national hero and leader, demand his release could hardly evoke any surprise. What was important was that many white South Africans also regarded him as a serious political hero, too. An opinion poll conducted in March 1980 showed that 54% of Johannesburg’s white residents deemed necessary to release Mandela. So there was no exaggeration in the words of Mac Maharaj, ‘the name of Nelson Mandela lives on in the minds and hearts of his people and all democrats throughout the world...Within his lifetime he has become a living legend’.⁵²

In 1980, the ANC leadership officially called on its structures, supporters and other democrats inside the country to embark on a Release Mandela Campaign. Percy Qoboza, the redoubtable editor of the *Sunday Post* in Johannesburg launched the initiative in an editorial on 9 March 1980. He called on his readers to sign a petition and more than 86 000 responded, drawing in support of many organisations and prominent leaders. A Release Nelson Mandela Campaign was formed that same month.⁵³ Why was the official establishment of the campaign projecting Mandela as the liberation movement’s public face necessary considering the fact that he was

51 *Sunday Post*, 9 March 1980.

52 ‘Outstanding people’s leaders: Part 2 Nelson Mandela’, *Sechaba*, December 1982, 31.

53 See for example, ‘For the sake of SA, free Nelson Mandela’, *Sunday Post*, 21 March 1980; ‘Release Mandela call is growing rapidly’, *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 June 1980; ‘Churches must save the soul of the nation by supporting the campaign to free Mandela – or commit an act of treason against God’, *Post*, 23 March 1980; ‘Worldwide calls to free Mandela’, *Post*, 12 October 1980; ‘SWAPO joins Mandela call’, *Post*, 6 April 1980; ‘Free Mandela say Tanzania and Kenya’, *Post*, 13 April 1980.

incarcerated at Robben Island and the exiled Tambo was the official leader of the ANC?

The answer is provided by the ANC's strategic decision to focus on the importance of international solidarity as one of the four most important pillars of the struggle for national liberation in South Africa. For the ANC, the question arose during the 1960s: How could international solidarity be nurtured and then sustained for the duration of the liberation struggle in apartheid ruled South Africa? The challenge was for the ANC to develop a multi-faceted strategy to strengthen the international appeal and to consolidate this burgeoning solidarity with the support of various social movements, non-governmental organisations, and multi-lateral organisations such as the UN, OAU and the Non- Aligned Movement. This also included the support of many governments around the world.⁵⁴ As an example, on 14 November 1980 the government of India awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding to Nelson Mandela. The award ceremony in Delhi was graced by the presence of Indira Gandhi, the prime minister of India, and OR Tambo who received the award on behalf of Mandela. The government of India regarded Mandela as a front ranking leader of the oppressed people of South Africa and admired his unflinching courage in waging a relentless struggle against social injustice and racial discrimination. The ideals of liberty, equality and justice cherished by Mandela in whose memory the award was instituted was likened to Nehru's love of freedom and a vision of a society free of prejudices and intolerance. Similar to Nehru, Mandela was a man of peace fighting against the oppression of his people. He dedicated himself in constructing a society in which people should live in harmony. He also recognised the supremacy of the moral law that underlay national and international relations and without which there could be no enduring peace. Mandela declared his total commitment to this cause in the following words; 'it is an ideal which I hope to live and to achieve. But if it need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die for'.⁵⁵

But the challenge still remained during the 1980s-that an engaging public face was needed by the liberation movement to further propel it to new heights. The answer may have been found in the rising influence of television as a tool of mass communication and its massive impact on US politics during the 1960. In fact one has to take into cognisance that television became a central part of American life in the 1950s. Moreover, technological advances made television sets less expensive and accessible to consumers throughout the US and therefore by the 1960s the majority of the households in America had a television set. Thus, the television became a part of everyday life of the American people. As sales boomed there were new opportunities for broadcasters and political parties. This was because politics in most parts of the world, particularly in the West, were becoming more personalised. If one analyses the US elections of 1960 - the presidential race to the White House involving Richard Nixon and John Kennedy- including those of subsequent US presidents- it is evident

54 See SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010).

55 'India pays tribute to Mandela', *Sechaba*, February 1981, 19; 'Mandela writes to India', *Sechaba*, October 1981, 23-25.

that it was far easier for television and related forms of broadcasting media in the US to focus on a particular individual rather than on entire national executive committees of both the Democratic Party or Republican Party.

It is worth emphasising the point that the 1960 election was the closest in history despite Kennedy's stirring rhetoric and apparent triumph in televised political debates, in their book entitled *Politics and Television*, Gladys and Kurt Lang write that in 1960:

Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy were the first presidential candidates to appear together before the television cameras. Four times-altogether four hours-within a span of four weeks they answered questions put to them by a panel of four newsmen. In their first encounter, on September 26 in Chicago, and on October 27 in Washington D.C., and October 21 in New York, the two men spoke from the same studio. On October 13, when Nixon was in Los Angeles and Kennedy was in New York, they met each other at a distance-through split-screen technique. Judged by the audience they reached, the broadcast was a huge success. Between 65 and 70 million watched any one telecast; somewhere between 85 and 120 million were estimated to have witnessed at least one of the four (television broadcasts).⁵⁶

Indeed, from the 1960s onwards it gradually became clear that in terms of a sound political strategy and in order to appeal to voters, a public face representing a leader of a given political party, organisation or movement had to be the focal point of a political campaign that called for widespread grassroots support of the party's policies and political programs. This was also the case in Europe which had to adopt the US example regarding the impact of television on the political fortunes of rival political parties. As an example, both the Labour and Conservative parties in Britain mimicked their US counterparts and used the television during political campaigns in the 1960s. It was courting disaster to organise a political campaign for the president of the USA or the prime minister of the United Kingdom by using the collective draw card of a given political party national executive council. But some in the Congress Alliance argued that in terms of promoting inclusivity and transparency this was still possible concerning the struggle for national liberation in South Africa. The exiled ANC disagreed with this viewpoint because it was becoming increasingly difficult for the liberation movement to promote its international solidarity campaign by focusing on the Congress Alliance as a collective or its national executive committee as a group.

It became obvious to the leadership of the ANC that the advent of multimedia, particularly television as a mass communication tool was not merely a passing fad. But there were questions which needed answers. Firstly, was it correct to identify one individual to promote the struggle for liberation in South Africa? If the answer was yes, would not the ANC and allies create a situation where the cult of the personality would be the order of the day, as had happened in the Soviet Union with Joseph Stalin; in Cuba with Fidel Castro; and in China with Chairman Mao Tse Tung?

56 G.E. Lang and K. Lang, *Politics and Television* (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1984), 97; G. and K. Lang, *Voting and Nonvoting* (Boston: Blaisdell, 1968); T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960).

It was obvious that if one wanted an influential international solidarity campaign to succeed, one could not just have a general campaign such as: free all political prisoners incarcerated in South African prisons by the apartheid regime— end of story – however noble this human rights ideal was! That would suffice to intellectualise such ideals in abstract terms. But how would one get the international community and democrats across the racial divide to focus on that noble issue without identifying one individual to become the symbol and the ‘public face’ of that concerted political campaign? As argued earlier, a formal decision was adopted by the exiled National Executive Committee of the ANC during the early 1980s to assign this role to Mandela, particularly after the negative 1974 report of the ANC’s Sub-Committee for the Release of All Political Prisoners.⁵⁷ Immediately, after this decision was taken by the ANC, the international community and members of the anti-apartheid movement in various countries were focused on Mandela who became the symbol of all political prisoners, not only in South Africa but in other parts of the world too. In Marxist terms the identification of Mandela as the public face of the liberation struggle could be defended from Marxist view about the relationship between the particular and the general. What were the circumstances behind the choice of Mandela by the ANC to play such a crucial role?

- Mandela was the ideal choice because he was the first leader of MK, the military wing of the ANC. He had also spearheaded the All-in-Africa Conference held in South Africa in 1961-defying the apartheid regime’s security forces after Sharpeville Massacre. Furthermore, by the 1960s he had already shown signs of remarkable leadership potential within the organisation. Those who knew him and had worked with him in South Africa argued that he possessed charismatic qualities; qualities that were essential in a leadership role. He had what we call gravitas, a magnetic personality, so much so that when he entered a hall or a meeting, he immediately became the focus of attention.
- Mandela already had a larger than life image among the majority of the oppressed; they referred to him as the ‘Black Pimpernel’ and had unbounded admiration for his exploits in outwitting the regime’s security forces while he was operating in the ANC’s underground during the early 1960s and underwent military training outside the borders of South Africa. Henceforth, the majority of the people were already talking about ‘Mandela the revolutionary’. Furthermore, his secret sojourns elsewhere on the African continent and the links he had established with other nationalist struggles and leaders, stood him in good stead.
- However much the apartheid racist regime tried to destroy his name, his courageous and fearless conduct as a principled member of the ANC during the Rivonia Trial served to elevate and augment his international stature. Mandela’s dignified conduct at this trial was underscored by his now famous (and often quoted) statement that he was ready to die for the cause. Therefore the ANC was certainly not taking an unknown figure into the international arena.

57 Political prisoners included women prisoners held at Barberton and Welkom prisons.

- Very interestingly, if one looks at the Mass Democratic Movement after the release of Mandela and other political prisoners, no one in the ANC disputed the leadership of O.R. Tambo by pursuing factional politics and agendas or commenting on leadership issues and the stewardship of the ANC. That says something about their level of political consciousness, maturity and understanding of the challenges that public faced the banished organisation. There was no overt animosity in the leadership structure and this was an important reason why the Release Mandela Campaign achieved its goals.
- The drive to garner international solidarity would not have enjoyed the same impact if relationships had been fractious on the decision to use Mandela as the public face of the campaign. To be sure there were instances when the leadership at Robben Island had their squabbles – Harry Gwala, Oom Gov and Mandela being the warring culprits. But these were internal dynamics that were duly resolved in routine organisational structures.
- Mandela was highly principled and grounded as far as the political traditions of the ANC were concerned. For example, when the devious apartheid regime tried to set a divide-and-rule trap to besmirch his reputation, he saw right through it. Pretoria sent his cousin Chief Matanzima (the leader of the Transkei Bantustan) and others to try and convince him to forsake the struggle as an individual and in this way ‘buy’ his freedom. He would have none of it and bluntly refused the offer. His forthright political principles further convinced the ANC to structure the campaign for the release of political prisoners around Mandela
- Even if the oppressed in South Africa did not express it loudly, the fact of the matter was that Mandela’s name resonated with them and they appreciated and understood the great sacrifices he and other political prisoners had made to realise the liberation cause.
- The Release Mandela Campaign was inclusive although it bore Mandela’s name. All the posters, t-shirts, placards, memorabilia, banners, flags, stickers, protest songs etc. proclaimed the release not only of Nelson Mandela but also of other well-known political prisoners such as Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Dennis Goldberg, Wilton Mkwayi, and so forth.
- In hindsight, there was also the element of mystique that surrounded Mandela at the time and continues to do so into his twilight years. The ANC had no real photographs or other forms of images of him since his incarceration on Robben Island except the one with Sisulu. This perhaps contributed to the aura and interest that fuelled the international campaign.
- All these factors culminated in the famous Release Mandela music concert at the Wembley Stadium in London, in 1988 when the message spread across the world was the release of political prisoners in South Africa. Had the ANC not been able to introduce the political element as the cornerstone of this hugely successful extravaganza, it would have become just another popular music concert. Artists and music stars such as Tracy Chapman, Joan Armatrading, UB 40, Simple

Minds, Dire Straits, Eurhythmics, Whitney Houston, George Michael and Stevie Wonder, to name a few, participated.⁵⁸

We will use the United Kingdom to analyse the impact of the ANC's decision to choose Mandela as the public face of the liberation struggle. Mark Hudson in his newspaper article for *The Daily Telegraph* writes that the prelude to the hugely successful 1988 Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute held at Wembley Stadium was marked by the 1981 TV show *Only Fools and Horses*. This is because the producer of the show chose Nelson Mandela House as the name of the domicile of the TV shows anti-heroes del Boy and Rodney. The idea that a tower block in Peckham would be named after an African freedom fighter said it all. This was because until then, Mandela was relatively obscure and less glorious figure. Hudson is of the view that 'but the Mandela name and image intriguing trajectory through the British media and popular culture tells as much about ourselves...the view from the British sitting room and street has not been entirely insignificant in the growth of the Mandela phenomenon'.⁵⁹ On 3 August 1981 Mandela was awarded the Freedom of the City of Glasgow, more than 500 people came to bear witness, including 16 representatives of Commonwealth countries, mostly, High Commissioners, baillies and members of local government council, church and trade union leaders, representatives of the anti-apartheid movement, dignitaries from the City of Glasgow and the ANC.⁶⁰ Later that year Glasgow's Lord Provost travelled to the UN to launch a Declaration of Mayors, calling for Mandela's immediate and unconditional release. In Hull, the gardens opposite the house of the leader of the British Anti-Slavery Movement, William Wilberforce, were named Nelson Mandela Gardens, and in London, the street where the AAM had its headquarters were renamed Mandela Street. The AAM consciously used the Mandela campaign to try and reach out to new supporters. In 1983, to mark Mandela's 65th birthday, it set up a Free Nelson Mandela co-ordinating committee chaired by former student leader, Trevor Phillips. Millions of viewers watched the television profile of Mandela, *South Africa's Other Leader*, timed to coincide with P.W. Botha's visit to Britain in June 1984.⁶¹

Music made a big contribution to raising anti-apartheid consciousness from the earliest days of the AAM. From the early 1980s mainstream musicians identified with the international anti-apartheid campaign. The first group to release a record calling for Mandela's release was Birmingham rock band The Sussed- they advertised their song as 'beating the drum to the release of our brother'. In 1984 Jerry Dammers and the Special AKA's awareness raising hit single and anthem, *Free Nelson Mandela* conscientised the British public that Mandela was an important figure to be known

58 Section based on a summary of extensive oral history interviews with Essop Pahad conducted by Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu in 2008 and 2009, SOHP.

59 'Nelson Mandela in British popular culture', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 December 2013.

60 'Glasgow honours Mandela', *Sechaba*, October 1981, 20.

61 C. Gurney, 'In the heart of the beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1959-1994', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 1*, 339.

about and respected, Hudson further elaborates, ‘with its irresistibly breezy tinge of South African township jive music, the song brought references to the ANC onto BBC’s Top of the Pops for it peaked at number 9-though the Specials founder admitted he had barely heard of Mandela until he attended an anti-apartheid concert the previous year’. In 1985 OR Tambo unveiled the large fibreglass bust of Mandela outside the Royal Festival Hall in London. It was created by artist Ian Walters and emblazoned with the words ‘the struggle is my life’. The bust was immediately destroyed by vandals and eventually set on fire for there were grumblings about the prominence given to a ‘foreign’ (black) revolutionary, jailbird and avowed socialist. The bust was later recast by Walters in bronze in 1988. In 1986, Artists Against Apartheid, founded by Dammers and Dali Tambo, hosted a landmark outdoor festival on the Clapham Common to protest against apartheid. The free concert was initiated by Jerry Dammers and fellow musicians, and was followed a mass march through central London. It was the inspiration for the larger-scale Wembley concert held two years later. Fundraising for the AAM became part of the repertoire of bands like The Smiths and UB 40, and in April 1987 Artist Against Apartheid filled the Albert Hall with an all-star line-up. Though the 1988 event was regarded as Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute concert, it was held on 11 June 1988, weeks before the Mandela’s official 70th birthday on 18 July 1988.⁶² It was organised by the British Anti-Apartheid Movement to exert pressure on the South African government to release Mandela and other political prisoners. Tony Hollingsworth was the executive producer of the music event and the Wembley Stadium was packed with 72 000 people. It was described by BBC presenter Robin Denselow as the biggest and most spectacular pop-political event of all time because it was broadcasted to 67 countries and an audience of 600 million watched the music event. It involved 83 artists and lasted for almost 12 hours. The list of artists included, among others, Mirriam Makeba, Youssou N’Dour, Simple Minds, Sting, Dire Straits, Peter Gabriel, The Bee Gees, Jonathan Butler and Hugh Masekela. Though the Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute was successful by all counts. Hollingsworth remembers:

The show was broadcast live by many of nearly 100 national broadcasters who signed up to air it, including the BBC, Fox television in the US, China’s CCTV, the Soviet Union’s state broadcaster Gosteleradio and India’s Doordarshan. It was banned and censored in South Africa. As I intended the music stars called for the release of Mandela, the end of apartheid and the freedom of South Africa. Getting artists was difficult as Mandela was not the figure he is today and few people in the world knew much about him or the ANC. Few noticed that we missed Mandela’s real birthday by five weeks, or that the photograph we used and the words we quoted were from the Rivonia trial some 25 years before- he had been in prison ever since. I remember, when trying to book one particular artist, talking to a senior,

62 ‘Nelson Mandela in British popular culture’, *Daily Telegraph*, 6 December 2013.

Harvard educated music agent in LA who asked what this Mandela guy would sing?⁶³

Later, O.R. Tambo's message acknowledging the importance of the hugely successful transnational event was posted on the ANC website; "the worldwide campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela and political prisoners made a decisive contribution... One event in particular that symbolised that campaign- 'the Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday tribute'... The ANC owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the artists and performers and all those who made that event possible".⁶⁴

It was not only the creative artists who played a role in the campaign to release political prisoners in South Africa. British students also played a role in this regard and, as an example, on 11 July 1981, the tenth annual Southern Africa Conference, jointly organised by the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and the National Union of Students (NUS), took place at Queen Mary College in the east end of London. This event was attended by about 100 student activists from over 50 colleges and universities. Keynote speakers included representatives of the ANC Youth Section. Two films were shown at this conference; namely, 'We are all workers' which documented a strike at Fattis and Monis factory. The other film shown was 'South Africa belongs to us', about the struggle of women in South Africa, and the AAM Women's Committee made a special plea for delegates to mobilise support from women students, especially for the women political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia.⁶⁵ This was not an exceptional event when the NUS was in the forefront of leading campaigns about the release of political prisoners. Such solidarity campaigns were permanent in the NUS calendar.

Postscript

It is important for us to guard against concluding that the ANC was unique and exceptional in using the tactical strategy of harmonising the individual and collective imperatives in a given struggle for political emancipation. I will show below that the liberation movement is not unique in this regard. In the case of the politically oppressed in Latin America, particularly Chile, the World Communist Movement adopted a similar political strategy and made an international call for the release of Luis Corvalán, the long-time leader of the Chilean Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Chile) whose support was critical to the rise in 1970 of Salvador Allende, the first elected Marxist head of state in the Western Hemisphere. Luis Corvalán was a charismatic leader who succeeded in mobilising popular support behind himself as a personality. The Chilean Communist Party (PCCh) was formed in 1922 by radical activists who were influenced by Leninist dedicated to the promotion of Comintern

63 T. Hollingsworth, 'Nelson Mandela dies: the story behind his 70th birthday concert', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 December, 2013. See also, C. Gurney, 'In the heart of the beast'.

64 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela>.

65 'UK Students Step Up Solidarity Struggle', *Sechaba*, September, 1981, 14.

strategy in Latin America. It emerged as a direct outgrowth of the Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Obrero Socialista) formed in 1912.

Luis Corvalán will be remembered in the west as a high-profile political prisoner in General Augusto Pinochet's regime of terror. He was subsequently exchanged for the Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky in 1976. He remained exiled in Russia for a number of years and published articles in the Chilean Communist press, Soviet publications and also the *World Marxist Review*. Although there were many other Chilean political prisoners incarcerated in jail by Pinochet, the Soviet Union and others launched a concerted campaign for Corvalán's release and the call for Corvalán's freedom became the symbol of Chilean resistance. When he was finally set free Corvalán travelled to the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic and other socialist countries to thank those who had supported him so valiantly. Corvalán also attended international conferences and was one of the first political prisoners to publicly support the release of Mandela and other South African political prisoners.⁶⁶

Another interesting case study is that of Ananias Maidana the former general secretary of the Communist Party of Paraguay. He served more than twenty years as a political prisoner under the violent dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner. The Paraguayan regime was exceptionally repressive at the time but the international solidarity movement was unable to build an effective campaign for his release. The World Communist Movement and others demanded that he be set free but could not sustain a specific campaign to this end. Yet Maidana's case was just as deserving as those of Corvalán and Mandela. He served a long term of imprisonment just as Mandela did and was just as courageous. The crucial difference was that the ANC, as a liberation movement, was able to mobilise its struggle around Mandela in a manner that no political organisation in the world had ever done before or since.

In terms of the geopolitics of the Cold War in South East Asia – in particular the freedom struggle in Vietnam – the relationship between the individual and the collective was also identified as vitally important. It was quite clear that Ho Chi Min was a central figure in Vietnam's international solidarity campaign. He represented the public face of the liberation struggle in Vietnam and his name featured in slogans, protest songs, etc. But of course General Giap was also prominent because of his tremendous capacity as a symbol of guerrilla warfare and a famed military leader who held the invading forces at bay. It was not surprising that the ANC established a fraternal relationship with their Vietnamese counterparts. In the May 1973 issue of *Sechaba*, the official journal of the ANC, an article entitled 'Lessons from Vietnam' was published. This article cited the following perceptive words expressed by Pham Van Dong, the prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: '...if the world allows the shameful system of racialism to continue in South Africa, then we would have made no progress'. With these words the prime minister confirmed Vietnam's solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa. This was during a meeting with members and delegates of the World Peace Council (WPC), a multi-

66 Interviews with Essso Pahad conducted by Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, Johannesburg, SOHP. These interviews cover more than ten one hour sitting during a period of about 10 months in 2008-2009.

lateral organisation which will be analysed in chapter 3 of this volume. Van Dong added: '... become master of your own affairs and you will be respected by the whole world. That has been our experience'.⁶⁷ At this conference the continent of Africa was represented as part of the delegation by Alex La Guma of the ANC's External Mission and member of the WPC's Cultural Commission. In his report to the ANC, La Guma opined that Vietnam had many lessons to offer for those engaged in a national liberation struggle in their own countries. In order to win the fight against colonialism and imperialism, the oppressed people had to be drawn into the struggle; despite difficulties and hardship, the people's organisation had survived. He noted that the Vietnamese people were organised from street to street, at the city level and from district to district; that there was complete cooperation between the people and their elected leaders and the army; and that there was close cooperation between the urban population and the people of the countryside. The national liberation struggle in Vietnam could never have been all-embracing and could not have reached a successful conclusion without the spirit of patriotism and a programme capable of giving the oppressed masses a clear understanding of what they were fighting for. In South Vietnam, the National Liberation Front welded the people together in the struggle against imperialist aggression, and the outcome was a peaceful, independent and democratic South Vietnam.⁶⁸

In 1978 the ANC's Politico-Military Strategy Commission, led by the ANC's president, Oliver Tambo, and made up of Thabo Mbeki, Joe Modise, Moses Mabhida, Joe Gqabi and Joe Slovo, was invited by their political colleagues to undertake a study tour in Vietnam. After the visit, the Commission submitted its report (also known as *The Green Book/Theses on our Strategic Line*) to the ANC's national executive committee in March 1979.⁶⁹ In short, the NEC of the ANC was informed that in Vietnam, the political struggle was always considered the most fundamental form of the struggle for national liberation. It constituted a base for development and strengthening of the armed struggle, but in the process, it was always combined with armed struggle to defeat the enemy. This combination of different strategies and tactics is a vital step to higher forms of the struggle for national liberation. The aim in Vietnam was to train the oppressed masses and mould them into a more active political force which was aggressive and at a particular moment became representative of those who took up arms and attacked the colonisers and oppressors. The NEC listened patiently and then in 1979 proposed the formation of the small commission to prepare a report – the Green Book. Thabo Mbeki recalls:

Therefore ... in 1979, [we were] part of the ANC commission to formulate ANC strategy after visiting Vietnam, and to compile the Green Book.

67 'Lessons of Vietnam', *Sechaba*, vol. 7, no. 5, 1973.

68 Ibid. See also S.M. Ndlovu, 'The African National Congress and progressive anti-colonial internationalism' in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 3* (Austin: Pan-African University Press, 2018), chapter 17.

69 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/green-book.html>

Certainly a lot of our comrades concentrated on the question of military operations and the role of MK. But it would be incorrect to say that as a result of the visit to Vietnam we then concluded that there was a need for popular mobilisation. It would be wrong because indeed we were doing that in Botswana during the early 1970s and in 1975, I was sent to Swaziland because of the political changes in Mozambique – including the changes in Portugal which led to the independence of Portuguese colonies in Africa.⁷⁰

To conclude this chapter which mainly focuses on the relationship between an individual and a collective in contemporary politics, when Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, there were internal dynamics in the liberation movement that might have scuppered his ascendancy to the presidency of both the African National Congress (ANC) and the country. But this did not happen, because Mandela's colleagues in the ANC made it possible for him to reach the pinnacle of politics and assume the presidency. To say this is not to downplay Mandela's personal role in his achievement. It also says a great deal about the ANC's leadership maturity and level of political consciousness. The collective and consultative traditions of the ANC proved invaluable during Mandela's term as the first president of the democratic Republic of South Africa. These traditions, as much as Mandela's charismatic personality, shaped the style of his achievements of his brief time in office. Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela subsequently became the first democratically elected president of the Republic of South Africa in 1994 and remained the public face of his beloved organisation, the ANC, until his death in 2013.

70 Interview with Thabo Mbeki, 15 December 2015 (SOHP); S.M. Ndlovu, 'The African National Congress and progressive anti-colonial internationalism'; S.M. Ndlovu, 'Black youth and students in exile in southern Africa: Solidarity politics and the struggle for national liberation' in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 3* (Austin: Pan-African University Press, 2018), chapter 24.



photo courtesy of Gille De Vlieg

Youngsters toyi toyi UDF Rally City Hall, Johannesburg



photo courtesy of Gille De Vlieg

Elijah Barayi and fellow trade unionist display their support for the Release Mandela and other political prisoners campaign

MIRIAM MAKEBA



© The Miriam Makeba Estate and City Media Two. Courtesy of Miriam Makeba Foundation.

Miriam Makeba



© The Miriam Makeba Estate. Courtesy of Miriam Makeba Foundation.

Miriam Makeba UN General Assembly Speech held March 9, 1964.