

# 14 The Morogoro conference: A moment of self-reflection

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The Morogoro Consultative Conference, held from 25 April to 1 May 1969, was a watershed in the history of the African National Congress and its partners in the Congress movement. According to an official statement, the conference was attended by more than 70 leaders and delegates representing 'ANC branches, units of Umkhonto we Sizwe, leaders of the Indian and coloured peoples and of the revolutionary working class movements'.<sup>1</sup> Delegates assembled in the Tanzanian town to review the 'policy, strategy, leadership structure and style of work of the movement'.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the conference, a number of resolutions had been passed on strategy and tactics, as well as on the structure of the ANC.

Decisions taken at the conference were designed to concentrate the alliance leadership in Africa; to pare down the National Executive Committee; create a Revolutionary Council to integrate both the political and military components of the struggle; and to restrict ANC membership for alliance members in exile to Africans only. This reflected the seriousness of the issues that had arisen prior to the conference and the determination of the leadership of the Congress movement to unite its cadres behind a common programme.

The conference took place at the close of the most difficult and challenging decade for all South Africa's liberation movements. Nine years earlier, the ANC and PAC had been banned. Since then, thousands of activists had been incarcerated or forced into exile. The state's brutal crackdown had rendered the movement largely ineffective inside South Africa, despite heroic efforts to keep the flames of resistance burning. By the end of the Rivonia Trial in 1964, many of the key internal leaders of the ANC and PAC had been sentenced to long terms in prison, and leadership of the liberation movements shifted decisively to the incipient exile structures. The launch of militant groups such as MK, Poqo and ARM marked another decisive turning point in the liberation

1 *Communique*, nd, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, p 13.3, University of the Western Cape.

2 *Ibid.*

struggle. The turn to armed struggle was a response to the violence of the apartheid state, but was premised on a fundamental reappraisal of the character of the freedom struggle itself. The stresses and strains engendered by these far-reaching changes profoundly affected the functioning of the liberation movements, especially as they tried to reconstitute themselves in exile.

It was in this context that a number of critical issues arose within the ANC and between the Congress movement allies. Matters that dominated the Morogoro conference had been festering within the ANC since it was banned: integration of diverse ethnic groups into the organisation; coordination of the political and military elements of the struggle; and building a new leadership echelon, not only to replace those who had been imprisoned, but also to deal with the internationalisation of the struggle.

Foremost among the issues were the role of MK (which raised questions about the objectives of the armed struggle, as well as the relationship between military and political strategy), the position of 'non-Africans' in the ANC (which posed the question of commitment to a non-racial struggle) and whether the leadership should be located in Africa or in Europe. Inextricably linked to these questions were the role of the South African Communist Party, the lifestyle and operating procedures of the exiled leaders, the relationship between the exiled and internal sections of the movement, and the influence of pan-Africanism on the ANC's policies and operations.

A number of attempts to deal with some of these issues had been made prior to the 1969 conference. In October 1962, the ANC convened a consultative conference at Lobatse in Botswana, which was attended by activists from South Africa and in exile. The main objective was to 'consider the measures required to give a new impetus to organisational work in pursuance of the decision to make preparations for armed revolutionary struggle'.<sup>3</sup> The external leadership could not formally establish itself, as the internal leadership was still in office, albeit underground.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, being in exile was a wholly new experience for the ANC, which did not yet have visible and viable international networks. The relationship between the internal and external leadership was severely hampered by the South African government's repression and growing pressure on neighbouring states to deny assistance to the liberation movements. Finally, exiles were scattered throughout Africa, Europe and the United States, which made coordination of activities a daunting task.

Two more consultative meetings were held after Lobatse. The first, at Morogoro in May 1965, was attended by the ANC National Executive and leading figures from MK. Convened in the wake of the Rivonia Trial, the meeting set itself the task of 'improving our machinery for vigorously pursuing the objectives of our struggle, including, in particular, the movement of Umkhonto units to the

<sup>3</sup> African National Congress, *Directive on the Nature of the Forthcoming Conference*, March 1969, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, p 13.3, UWC.

574 <sup>4</sup> Interview with Simon Makana, conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, SADET Oral History Project.

home front'.<sup>5</sup> In November 1966, the ANC met with its alliance partners in Dar es Salaam to discuss the role and status of members of these fraternal organisations in exile. Both these meetings were important attempts at organisational regroupment and political reorientation, but achieved only limited results. Many of the issues continued to simmer below the surface, and erupted into the open in the aftermath of the Wankie and Sipolilo military campaigns. Faced by its most serious crisis in exile, the leadership initiated a process of consultation and discussion that culminated in the Morogoro conference.

### Non-racialism<sup>6</sup>

In 1955, the Congress of the People declared in its Freedom Charter that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white'. However, the structures of the liberation movement continued to reflect racial and ethnic divisions that seemed to be in line with the divide-and-rule strategy of the apartheid state. Africans had the ANC, Indians the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), coloureds the Coloured Peoples Congress (CPC), and whites the Congress of Democrats (COD). Only the South African Communist Party (SACP) drew its membership from across racial and ethnic boundaries.

When the ANC went into exile, a core consideration was how to combine its commitment to the principle of non-racialism with the necessary emphasis on the fact that the African majority lay at the centre of the quest for liberation. On the ground, the organisation had to address mounting pressure to open its ranks to coloured, Indian and white activists, while retaining an African leadership. This was not the first time that the ANC had to face this issue. A statement of policy in the ANC's annual report of 1958 reaffirmed its commitment to a non-racial ('multiracial') society and acknowledged that it was 'essential to work with all forces that are prepared to struggle for the same ideas'.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, membership remained closed to all but Africans. At the time, the following arguments were made to justify the fact that the ANC was an exclusively African organisation:

#### Oppression of sorts

Nobody can doubt that however other racial groups may be oppressed, Africans are oppressed in special ways. As a result, the immediate grievance, aims and outlook of Africans, their daily needs and aspirations, are not identical with those of other racial groups in South Africa, however identical their long-term aim of liberation might be. Is it possible to imag-

5 African National Congress, *Directive on the Nature of the Forthcoming Conference*, March 1969, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, p 13.3, UWC.

6 Some parts of this section were written by Sifiso Ndlovu.

7 African National Congress, *Annual Report, 1958*, cited in Bernard Magubane, *Sport and Politics in an Urban African Community: A Case Study of African Voluntary Organisations*, unpublished Master of Social Science dissertation, University of Natal, November 1963, p 192.

ine, then, that the Africans will not be organised as a separate group with separate group interests as long as their position remains? If, for instance, the ANC opened its doors to become a multi-racial organisation, an all-in political party with a liberationist programme, would there not immediately be a need felt among Africans for a purely African organisation to put forward the views of the Africans? Would that need not in fact be felt even by those who simultaneously supported the all-in body? And if it were not felt by them, would it not be felt by others? And if it were so, how could we of the Congress Alliance fail to support that organisation, to assist it and recognise it as the distinctive voice and spokesman of the African people?

### **White battering ram**

We know that a considerable part of the pressure for 'one congress' comes from the European supporters of the democratic cause. It would be well for them, too, to consider their special position in the country, and in the Congress Alliance. Their organisation, the Congress of Democrats, is not an organisation of an oppressed community, but rather an organisation of *non-conformists* from the ranks of an oppressor caste. Such people, whose courage is defying the conventional prejudices of white South Africa, are for us all a source of pride. There may well appear to be something contradictory in their renunciation of the colour bar side by side with their membership of a separate organisation. But they, too, have identical interests with other members of the Congress Alliance when one speaks of long-term interests – a common interest of all in liberation. But their immediate interests are surely not identical with ours. Their immediate interest is surely twofold. First, that they act as a battering ram of the liberation movement to break through the iron-hard core of European colour prejudice and racialism, and second, that they establish by their deeds the right and justification for white South Africans to become part of the native people of a free South Africa; and not like the British in India or the Dutch in Indonesia – an alien community for whom there is no place in the years after liberation.<sup>8</sup>

At the Morogoro conference, the issue of opening up membership to other races posed itself forcefully once again, but this time, as an organisational matter, in which the membership of 'non-Africans' and their representation on leading structures had to be resolved. However, there were a number of crucial underlying political matters at stake in the deliberations on this issue, including the fact that the most important protagonists in the debate were leading Communist Party members. The debate also reflected the influence that pan-Africanism had exerted on cadres based in Africa, and brought into sharp relief questions about the character of the liberation struggle.

576 8 Ibid, p 193.

The emergence of the ‘multiracial’ Congress movement and adoption of the Freedom Charter in the mid-1950s were landmark events that held the promise of an evolving, united movement that would transcend the parochial racial boundaries of existing organisations. The Treason Trial in the late 1950s broke down racial barriers even further, and helped to dissipate the suspicion that existed among members of these organisations, especially towards communists.<sup>9</sup> But it was the formation of MK that heralded the emergence of a genuinely non-racial organisation from the Congress movement. In 1963, the ANC’s London representative, Mendi Msimang, sent to Dar es Salaam applications for MK training from three South African students of Indian origin – Jayaram Naidoo, Ebrahim Mahomed and Hindurajan Pillay. They all had valid South African passports, which Msimang believed would be invaluable for MK operations inside the country. After personally interviewing the three students, Msimang wrote a report supporting their applications, having concluded that they ‘seem to be fine and keen to receive [political and military] education’.<sup>10</sup> For activists like Msimang, Raymond Mhlaba, Wilton Mkwayi and other members of the Congress Alliance, eradication of ethnic chauvinism and the creation of a new, non-racial South Africa became a priority and dominant ideological benchmark.

However, the shift to non-racialism remained confined to the military wing. Politically, the Congress movement continued to be ‘multiracial’, comprising four separate ethnic organisations, and these structures were transplanted into exile. Joe Matthews recalled:

When the state of emergency ended in August 1960, when the emergency was lifted, then of course all the leaders, everybody, came out, and correspondence occurred between OR [Tambo] and the internal leadership of the ANC, which of course at that time was already underground. And the leadership said no. You must establish an External Mission of the ANC, and we are not in favour of the South Africa United Front idea. It must be an ANC External Mission. Incidentally, Mandela was a leading figure in pressing for that approach – that the ANC must be projected internationally. Of course, there was some controversy, because some, like Yusuf Dadoo, said: ‘Then what happens to someone like me, who is in the Indian Congress but not a member of the ANC?’ Remember, at that time the ANC was an exclusively African organisation. But in spite of those misgivings, the decision taken was that, especially in the era of African independence, which was quite strong in 1960 – many countries were becoming independent, Nigeria became independent – it should be an ANC External Mission, headed by Tambo.<sup>11</sup>

9 Interview with Rusty Bernstein, conducted by Philip Bonner and Peter Delius, 29 March 1994, Johannesburg, Wits History Workshop.

10 Mendi Msimang, report to Dar es Salaam, 14/8/1964, ANC Morogoro Papers, Box 12, ANC Archives, UFH. A condensed biography was attached to each application.

11 Interview with Joe Matthews, conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, SADET Oral History Project. For Mandela’s argument, see Chapter 11.

Thus, it was the internal leadership of the ANC that decided that its external representatives 'should be the sole spokesmen on behalf of the liberation alliance and that the SAIC, CPC and COD should not establish separate external missions'. And, as Matthews and the Central Committee of the Communist Party noted, this decision was taken after the break-up of the United Front, and was endorsed by the leadership of the SACP and other congresses in the country.<sup>12</sup>

But the post-Rivonia crackdown decimated the ranks of the SAIC, the CPC and the COD, both internally and in exile. According to Karis and Gerhart, 'the agreement among members of the old Congress Alliance, that only the ANC would maintain offices abroad, had left allied Indian, coloured and white exiles in organisational limbo. (At home, the Indian and coloured congresses were virtually defunct but not banned, unlike the white Congress of Democrats)'.<sup>13</sup> To all intents, the Congress Alliance ceased to exist in South Africa, and it fell to the external elements to assume responsibility for leading the struggle.<sup>14</sup>

However, only the ANC, the SACP and MK were able to establish functioning structures in exile. Consequently, the Congress Alliance failed to build on the foundation laid in the 1950s and was rendered largely impotent, which placed enormous strains on the relationship between members. This caused considerable friction among both those who felt excluded and those within the organisation who believed that continued exclusion of non-Africans from the ANC was politically flawed. In addition, as the Central Committee of the Communist Party later pointed out:

... outside the country, non-African revolutionaries loyal to the original decision about the ANC's External Mission could neither create their separate communal organs nor participate as members of those ANC organs also mandated to speak on their behalf. In addition, there was widespread recognition that with the disappearance of the Congress Alliance, there was no longer any *public* expression (either inside or outside the country) of the true character of the revolutionary front in South Africa and, in particular, of the non-racial content of our struggle. Indeed, reports indicated that the sudden disappearance at all public levels of the liberation front of leaders like Dadoo (whom the South African masses

12 SACP CC, 'The Enemy Hidden Under the Same Colour', statement from the Central Committee, SACP, on the racist and anti-communist activities of the Group of Eight expelled from the ANC', *The African Communist*, 65, Second Quarter, 1976, pp 31-2. According to Andrew Masondo, Congress members imprisoned on Robben Island elected to have one representative on the structure that had been created to represent political prisoners – Ulundi – so that they would be able to speak with one voice. Interview with Andrew Masondo, conducted by Bernard Magubane and Sifiso Ndlovu, 24 August 2003, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

13 Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart, *From Protest To Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990*, Vol 5, *Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 1997, pp 35-6.

578 14 SACP CC, 1976, pp 31-2.

had always regarded as more than merely communal leaders) was being interpreted by many as reflecting a new policy of African exclusiveness.<sup>15</sup>

There were also those who felt that the status quo was especially incongruent in the exile context, particularly outside Africa, where sympathisers were not Africans. Pressure was mounting for official recognition of non-Africans who wanted to participate as full members of the ANC. The assertion that the African majority and the ANC should be in the vanguard of the struggle for freedom, and the shift in attitude in the London and Dar es Salaam offices during 1963-4 thrust the racial question to the forefront again. A critical factor in this regard was the dispute between Barney Desai, president of the South African CPC, and the ANC leadership in exile. An official report by the ANC claimed that, at a meeting on 8 August 1963, Desai indicated that the CPC was prepared to operate as an independent entity. He apparently insisted that the CPC was not prepared to subjugate itself to the leadership of the ANC and the African majority.<sup>16</sup> Desai chastised the ANC for neglecting the position and role of the minority groups in South Africa, pointing out that the organisation's propaganda material and major political statements did not always reflect the contribution of minority groups like coloureds.

In response, the ANC invoked the mandate endorsed by the Congress Alliance in the early 1960s. Membership would be confined to Africans, and the ANC would be the sole voice of the Congress Alliance in exile. Instead of addressing the political issues at stake, the leadership insisted that the mandate could be revoked or amended only by an annual general meeting of the ANC inside South Africa, or by a joint meeting of the executive committees of the Congress Alliance. The ANC, Desai was told, was obliged to adhere to the letter and spirit of this mandate and lead the struggle for liberation in South Africa with Africans – the majority group – at the forefront of the battle.<sup>17</sup> In their statement announcing the dissolution of the CPC in March 1966, Desai and Cardiff Marney rebutted the ANC's version of events, arguing that 'when, in 1962, the CPC proposed to the African National Congress (as the major organisation in the Alliance) that it should open its doors to all the oppressed groups, and that in return the Coloured People's Congress would dissolve, the proposal was flatly rejected and the ANC leadership unashamedly announced that it could no longer meet with the other congresses for joint consultation as was the practice in the past'.<sup>18</sup>

An attempt was made in the mid-1960s to partially resolve this problem when the National Executive Committee (NEC) created the ANC Collective, a

15 Ibid, p 32.

16 *Memorandum on Coloured Peoples Congress: External Representation*, ANC London Papers, Box 1 (MCHO2-Box 1), Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

17 Ibid.

18 B Desai and C Marney, 'Statement of Dissolution of the South African Coloured People's Congress', March 1966, cited in Karis and Gerhart, 1997, pp 370-1.

new apparatus, in London. It included non-Africans, under the late Robert Resha. Leaders of the other congresses, such as Dadoo and Reggie September, were appointed to represent the ANC at international conferences as members of the official ANC delegation rather than as representatives of their individual organisations. The ANC also began to invite leaders of other alliance partners to some of the NEC's extended meetings.<sup>19</sup>

However, matters came to a head in March 1965 when Barney Desai applied for membership of the ANC.<sup>20</sup> His application was rejected on the grounds that membership was open only to Africans.<sup>21</sup> In Desai's view, the policy of separate organisations multiplied racism and entrenched it in the sectional organisations. It led to a monumental betrayal of the best interests of the enslaved masses.<sup>22</sup>

In March 1966, Desai unilaterally cut ties with the ANC, dissolved the CPC and announced that it had merged with the PAC. The CPC was convinced, he said, that the PAC was not only the premier non-racial political organisation in South Africa, but also the only organisation committed to a resolute campaign 'to rid our struggle and our country of race divisions and race labels'.<sup>23</sup> A PAC newsletter, *Azania News*, reported that the merger was greeted with acclaim 'all over the world – in the African countries, the Scandinavian countries, the United Kingdom, etc'.<sup>24</sup> Britain's *Sunday Times* saw the merger as 'the first attempt to build a unitary, non-racial movement'.<sup>25</sup> The *Azania News* editorial also carried a caustic rebuttal of criticism to the merger voiced by Nana Mahomo, the PAC representative in London, denouncing him as 'an imperialist agent and multi-racialist, completely cut off from the revolution'. His sin was to suggest, in a magazine he edited called *Crisis and Change*, that it would have been better if the announcement of the CPC's dissolution and merger with the PAC had been made in South Africa.<sup>26</sup>

Desai's views and actions were not universally endorsed within the CPC, with some members supporting the continued existence of a separate coloured political organisation. However, the CPC's views on this issue seem to have changed with the arrival of Alex la Guma a year later.

Despite the leadership's high-handed approach, the issue remained a thorn in the side of the ANC. An increasing number of non-Africans demanded practical ways in which they could fully participate in the ANC struggle, and protested that if the ANC would not offer them membership, there should be

19 SACP CC, 1976, p 32.

20 Vladimir Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, Mayibuye Books, Bellville, 1999, pp 64-5.

21 R Resha, quoted in *South African Freedom News*, September/October 1965, p 4.

22 Ibid.

23 B Desai, memorandum to AAPSO, 19/5/1966, ANC Morogoro Papers, ANC Archives, UFH.

24 *Azania News*, 'International Acclaim for CPC-PAC Merger', nd. See also Editorial, ANC London Papers, Box 42 (MCH02-Box 42), Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

an independent and equal forum to represent Africans and non-Africans in the South African struggle.

In September 1965, Tambo attempted to deal with the concerns of non-Africans in exile by forming a task committee to 'draw up proposals relating to the strengthening of inter-congress cooperation at all levels'.<sup>27</sup> Yusuf Dadoo, Joe Slovo and Joe Matthews – all leading communists – were asked to serve on the committee. But this gesture served only to reflect the fact that the debate on open membership of the ANC was most fiercely contested among SACP members. The trio firmly favoured opening the doors to all Congress Alliance members, and even proposed the establishment of an interim mechanism – a Council of War – to coordinate the activities of all alliance members. The suggestion implied the continued existence of separate, race-based political organisations, but attempted to revive the unity that had prevailed in the alliance.

However, other leading communists such as Robert Resha, Tennyson and Ambrose Makiwane and JB Marks objected vigorously to the concept of anyone except Africans being granted membership of the ANC. Resha found the demand for open membership 'provocative' and 'irresponsible', and urged that the status quo be maintained:

The ANC has always maintained that it is not simply membership of the ANC by whites, coloureds and Indians that would achieve freedom, democracy and human dignity in South Africa, but joined struggles of existing progressive and revolutionary organisations for the realisation of political objectives that would break down all apartheid. In the course of its activities, the ANC has been attacked for upholding the correctness of a political line that gives room for joint political action by different organisations without necessarily submerging their independent existence.<sup>28</sup>

The task committee's proposals were initially shelved, but by mid-1966, it was apparent that the issue would remain contentious and possibly divisive. The task committee thus proposed that the ANC call a top-level meeting to address the Congress movement's problems, and recommended:

In those conditions of illegality or semi-legality and acute struggle we cannot stand on constitutional niceties. We have a number of tested and experienced leaders outside the republic. They are concerned in numerous ways with organisations at home and with solidarity work abroad. They continue to enjoy the support and confidence of members of our organisations. We think, therefore, that without over-much regard to formal questions of 'representation', etc, a top-level selection of leaders

<sup>27</sup> *Problems of the Congress Movement Following Meetings of Congress Supporters in London during September Last Year*, memorandum from the special committee, July 1966, ANC Morogoro Papers, ANC Archives, UFH.

<sup>28</sup> R Resha, quoted in *South African Freedom News*, September/October 1965, p 4.

should be convened, whose task is to review the situation in South Africa. It should decide on practical organisational measures to be undertaken in present-day emergency conditions to continue the existence and leadership of the alliance in a new form.<sup>29</sup>

The Congress Alliance convened a meeting in November 1966 to discuss problems that were having an adverse effect on its functional effectivity. Among those present were Tambo, Dadoo, Harmel, Slovo, Marks and Alex la Guma, who represented the CPC. The meeting, which was dominated by members of the SACP, elected a steering committee made up of Nokwe, Slovo, La Guma, Naicker and Matthews, and a recommendations committee comprising Kotane, Resha, La Guma, Naicker, Harmel, Mark Shope and Ray Alexander. Members of the alliance pinpointed various issues that were hampering the liberation struggle and, in his report, La Guma repudiated the alleged affiliation of the CPC and PAC. He acted as the main representative of this organisation and reaffirmed the Congress Alliance decision that recognised the ANC as the leader of the struggle.<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding such spirited advocacy for other races and ethnic groups to subject themselves to the leadership of the ANC, the consultative meeting rejected the London-based proposal that a non-racial Council of War be formed. Alliance members in London were not exposed to the formidable pressure of African nationalism that demanded of their African-based colleagues to perform a delicate balancing act. They needed to maintain a good working relationship with their socialist colleagues, and those based in Europe, while at the same time bearing in mind the reality of the African continent, where African nationalism was the dominant ideology.

The ANC leadership created a new subcommittee, consisting of leading SACP members Moses Kotane, JB Marks and Duma Nokwe, to deal with the Council of War proposal. They supported the views of Resha and rejected the initial committee's proposals. Moreover, they questioned the commitment of non-Africans to the armed struggle, a criticism that arose from the fact that some SAIC members had not endorsed the decision to turn to armed struggle in 1960. The yardstick by which commitment to the struggle as a whole was measured now became endorsement of the armed struggle:

When we say therefore [the] leadership outside the country has to do what can no longer be done at home – formulate policy and take practical

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Proposals for attendance included Maulvi Cachalia, MP Naicker, YM Dadoo, Mark Shope, J Gaetsiwe, Ray Alexander, Mick Harmel, Ben Turok, Ruth First, Joe Slovo, Brian Bunting, Phyllis Altman, Reggie September, Alex la Guma and James Phillips. It was left to the ANC to decide. Later in 1966, a subcommittee reported on the memorandum prepared by Slovo, Dadoo and Matthews in London. Present at the meeting were Moses Kotane, JB Marks and Duma Nokwe. The subcommittee rejected the idea of a Council of War and questioned some of the proposals.

<sup>30</sup> Alex la Guma, memorandum presented at the Congress Alliance meeting, 28/11/1966, ANC Morogoro Papers, Box 6, ANC Archives, UFH.

steps to lead our respective communities and the people of South Africa as a whole – are we saying that we must now impose the decision of an armed struggle on those organisations which have opposed it? If not, what do we mean by [a] Council of War, and the establishment of a body to plan and direct the overall strategy of our movement, a sort of council of national liberation enjoying the support of all constituents of the Congress Alliance?<sup>31</sup>

Despite its criticism of the original proposal, the subcommittee acknowledged that it would be necessary to find ‘proper accommodation for those individuals from other communities who have thrown in their lot completely with the armed struggle’. And, while agreeing that it might also be appropriate ‘to establish some machinery to get the constituent organisations of the alliance so that they could work together’, the subcommittee insisted that the constituent parts of the alliance had to maintain their separate identities. Most importantly, it contended that ‘many problems could be easily resolved if the leadership of the ANC was fully accepted by members of the alliance. In that event, people could be grouped together into subcommittees both of a military and political nature, and assigned specific tasks’.<sup>32</sup>

Yusuf Dadoo, who was the leading Indian Communist Party and SAIC member in exile, was becoming increasingly perturbed by the opposition to open membership emanating from leading Party and ANC members. He demanded that the ANC offer membership to non-Africans, failing which he would consider quitting the alliance. For Dadoo, the point had been reached

... where we have to consider how to utilise all the forces in South Africa for our struggle. The people at home are looking for guidance. The leadership, which is being given by the ANC, should be given by all. We are making too much of a question that the Indian people are non-violent. In the sabotage movement, the Indian people have participated. It is not true that they did not want an armed struggle. We are being told to subordinate ourselves; even the members of the ANC must subordinate themselves. If it is a considered view of this meeting that the ANC can go it alone, let it be so. But is this a correct move? If it is not decided today to have a council of this type, we will be faced with the same problem in the not so distant future. How best can we mobilise our people? It is not a question of power.<sup>33</sup>

He was supported by senior ANC member William Marula (Flag Boshielo), who argued: ‘We cannot say because a man is a member of the ANC he has a

31 *Report of the Subcommittee on Problems of the Congress Movement*, response of the Tanzania subcommittee to the London document, *Problems of the Congress Movement*, July 1966, 24 August 1966, ANC Morogoro Papers, ANC Archives, UFH.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

better right in the struggle. We should accept members of other groups as we accept members of the ANC. We must simply regard ourselves as South African fighters, no matter what organisation you belong to. Let these people work in the ANC. We will not be the last to be joined by people from different camps.<sup>34</sup> Ray Simons, another veteran communist, pointed to the growing trend in South Africa of whites identifying with the struggle of Africans. Various organisations at home, 'the Black Sash, the National Council of Women, and many others, have in different ways opposed the government. Among the Afrikaners themselves – intellectuals, writers, and other professionals – we must find ways of helping them to keep the image of the ANC alive'. Simons also pointed out that Indians and coloureds had accepted the ANC since 1918.<sup>35</sup>

Joe Slovo sought to craft a compromise between the two factions by proposing that membership of an overarching body be opened only to Africans, coloureds and Indians since, in his opinion, whites did not represent any national grouping. However, he suggested that special concessions should be made to allow some form of white participation on such a structure.<sup>36</sup> Joe Matthews dismissed the subcommittee's proposals and also criticised arguments suggesting that the formation of an exclusive body was a way to reconcile the ANC's non-racial principle and practice. Instead, he suggested full membership as the solution:

Members of minority groups are insecure. It is easy for us Africans to be complacent and take things for granted. It is a fact that African people are oppressed more than everybody else. Does the struggle need the full participation of other racial groups? The answer is yes! Their participation is indispensable. The answer does not lie in forming a Council of War, a committee or an organisation. The problem will be solved by the participation of our comrades in the work which the struggle demands of them.<sup>37</sup>

That the debate pitted leading communists against one another was a reflection of a number of underlying tensions and political cleavages within the Party. It seems that those communists who were based in Africa, such as Resha and Makiwane, had come under the influence of the very strong Africanist currents sweeping through the liberation movements in the 1960s. In a number of countries, pan-Africanism held sway politically, and in the early part of the decade, this was to the benefit of the PAC and at the expense of the ANC. Many of the leading communists based in London were non-Africans, which created the perception of a racial division within the Party. The rift was

34 *Ibid*, p 5.

35 *Ibid*, p 8.

36 *Ibid*, p 7.

37 *Ibid*.

deepened by the fact that Africa-based Party members were close to the 'real' struggle arena, whereas the London-based cadres were perceived as primarily garnering solidarity. And, since African members of the Party could also be members of the ANC, they were far better positioned to influence policy than their non-African comrades. The intensity of the debate over open membership was thus often a reflection of internal Party political dynamics.

Mavuso Msimang conceded that those who were based in Europe 'could not effectively participate in the struggle, partly because the ANC did not have enough resources to communicate with all its members throughout the world'.<sup>38</sup> Leaders based in Europe were often out of touch with what was happening at the forefront of the struggle, and could not make regular contributions to decision-making. From the perspective of the Party, the physical distance between Europe and Africa had created an equally vast divide between Party members, and between the Party and the ANC. As a result, the Party leadership, mainly based in London, exerted little influence on members. At a meeting between the Central Committee of the SACP and the NEC of the ANC, Joe Slovo lamented that the Party was suffering from 'the disease of exile', namely that it had failed to maintain contact with its cadres scattered across the globe. The Party was especially concerned that it had lost 'effective organised contact' with its members in Africa, and Slovo expressed the gravity of the situation thus:

To our shame there have, in recent years, been too many examples of backward political postures (including tribalism) of some of our members and other conduct which is foreign to our ideology and stands in conflict with standards of behaviour which our Party has always insisted upon. The absence of organised contacts has also encouraged all sorts of so-called revolutionaries or so-called Marxist-Leninists to fill the gap and to use the mantle of revolutionary doctrine for intrigue, etc.<sup>39</sup>

Although numerous ANC leaders rejected membership for non-Africans, a steering committee was established to facilitate cooperation within the Congress Alliance. The members were Oliver Tambo, Yusuf Dadoo and Michael Harmel. The decision to establish the committee at the Dar es Salaam conference in 1966 was viewed as a positive step by the Communist Party. Slovo believed that it 'enabled the Party more effectively than previously to throw its talent, resources and energies into the struggle, especially in regard to important spheres of internal work'. The decision did not solve the question of full participation or open membership, but it did create avenues of cooperation among alliance leaders and opened the way for the Party to play a more influential role in shaping the politics of the alliance, and especially of the ANC.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Mavuso Msimang, SADET Oral History Project.

<sup>39</sup> *Notes on the Discussion Between a Delegation of the Central Committee of the SACP and the National Executive Committee of the ANC*, undated, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

Issues such as the nature of the organisational structure at home and abroad, the state of organisation of the liberation movement and proposals for improved methods of waging the struggle continued to consume the Congress Alliance for the rest of the 1960s.<sup>40</sup> At the behest of the Recommendations Committee, set up after the 1966 Congress Alliance consultative meeting, a commission of inquiry was appointed to look into working relationships within the alliance, and in March 1969, reported an impasse in this area. The commission's findings, presented to the organisers of the Morogoro conference, questioned the leadership of the ANC both in the making and execution of policy and found that the leadership had lost the confidence of a substantial number of cadres, a most dangerous state of affairs. The leadership was criticised as being uninspiring and characterised by the imposition of decisions, harsh disciplinary measures and unwillingness to encourage discussion.

Four factors were identified as reflecting the inadequacy of the existing organisational structure. First, the nucleus of the ANC leadership had been elected during 1959 in conditions of legality and under a general policy of non-violence. Second, that leadership appeared to have failed because of what the commission described as 'an incorrect appraisal of the struggle for liberation'. Third, a significant number of non-African comrades, who had made an invaluable contribution to the struggle in the past, had been deliberately excluded from playing a meaningful role. Fourth, factionalism was undermining the effective functioning of the ANC's Executive Committee.<sup>41</sup>

The commissioners found that the Congress Alliance had fulfilled its historic role and recommended that a new revolutionary organisation be established. They proposed that it be called the South African National Congress (SANC), and that an executive composed of 'all dedicated and genuine revolutionaries, irrespective of their national origins',<sup>42</sup> be elected by a consultative conference. The sole criteria were defined as dedication and confidence. Artificial allotment of seats on national and other grounds was to be stringently avoided.

### The Wankie aftermath

The other major issue that preoccupied the ANC, and was arguably the catalyst for the decision to convene the Morogoro conference, was the challenge faced by the leadership after the armed campaigns in the mid-1960s. Between 1962 and 1965, a large number of MK cadres were trained in Eastern Europe and Africa. Their continued immobility in camps caused considerable frustra-

40 See *Problems of the Congress Movement* and *Problems and Perspectives Discussion Statement*, ANC London Papers, Box 2 and Box 3 (MCHO2-2/3), Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

41 Commission on Congress Alliance, *Report of the Meeting held on 23 March 1969*, BC 1081, Simons Collection, Department of Manuscripts and Archives, UCT.

42 Ibid. See also the proposed structure under different committees, including main duties of the Revolutionary Council.

tion and anxiety, especially in light of the apartheid government's escalating brutality. James April remembered how this state of affairs 'forced the political leadership to consider initiatives made by some military leaders to enter into an alliance with ZAPU, and help the latter to create a route that will benefit both parties in their pursuit to wage the struggle inside their countries'.<sup>43</sup> Rank and file members, especially soldiers based in camps in Africa, had become despondent and frustrated with the apparent lack of progress on the military front, and hoped these campaigns would create opportunities to engage the apartheid regime.

But the military incursions did not go according to plan. General Nqose recalled the outcome of the Wankie campaign: 'Some cadres were killed in battle, some died of sickness during the campaign, some were captured by the enemy, and some escaped into Botswana and were later sentenced to various periods in prison.'<sup>44</sup> The failure of the Wankie and Sipolilo incursions threw the ANC into crisis. Joe Matthews recalled that the mood in the movement was one of 'terrific disappointment'. After Wankie, he explained,

... a lot of chaps who survived in Botswana, that is, Hani and his group, returned to Lusaka and Morogoro and elsewhere. They just returned and they were never received in a military way. There were no medals; there was no official ceremony for the returning heroes. They just returned and the same routine of the movement carried on, with no acknowledgement of their role and so on. That applied both to the Wankie chaps and then the Sipolilo fellows who went in the north.<sup>45</sup>

Chris Hani spent almost two years in the Gaborone prison.<sup>46</sup> Together with other MK members, Hani drafted a memorandum to Tambo in which they charged the leadership with incompetence and living luxuriously in exile.<sup>47</sup> The document, which became known as the Hani Memorandum, contained a scathing critique of the leadership's apparent failure to recognise and give attention to those soldiers who participated in the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns. It contrasted the tough conditions that military cadres had to endure with the more comfortable lifestyle of those in the political wing. Joe Modise, Moses Kotane and Duma Nokwe were singled out for special criticism. Kotane, who as the treasurer general was one of the most senior members of the ANC, was chastised for prioritising exile over home. The implication was that there were leaders who had grown so accustomed to living abroad, and

43 Interview with James April, conducted by Moses Ralinala and Nhlanhla Ndebele, 30 July 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

44 Interview with General Nqose, conducted by Moses Ralinala and Nhlanhla Ndebele, 29 August 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

45 Interview with Joe Matthews.

46 Interview with General Tshali, conducted by Moses Ralinala and Nhlanhla Ndebele, August 2001, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

47 Shubin, 1999.

perhaps so enjoyed the comfort of exile, that the struggle on the home front was being neglected. OR Tambo was extremely perturbed by Hani's memorandum. According to Karis and Gerhart:

Tambo treated the memorandum as so serious a challenge that he called a meeting attended by all guerrillas and members of the ANC who were in Zambia. In an emotional speech, he expressed anger at the attack on Kotane, who had suffered a stroke, and was in a hospital in Moscow. Remarkably, however, according to Matthews, there was no official discussion of Hani's memorandum by the ANC leadership. Instead, Tambo proposed to the National Executive Committee (NEC) that a 'consultative conference' be held.<sup>48</sup>

Some leaders, such as Modise, called for severe action to be taken against the signatories to the memorandum, and anyone who sympathised with their views. Mavuso Msimang recalled that Modise wanted the MK critics to be tried before a military court:

Modise was the commander of MK, and of course wanted these people to be treated in a military fashion. They were soldiers, they signed the oath and if they were guilty of this type of thing, they should be brought before a court martial and shot. But some leaders argued against it and suggested that they should concede that mistakes had been committed by the leadership, and that efforts should be put towards solving them.<sup>49</sup>

Tambo was deeply disappointed by Hani's criticism and allegedly initially dismissed the memorandum as an ethnic vendetta. He apparently believed it was no coincidence that the memorandum was signed by 'Xhosa-speaking members from the Eastern Cape. These accusations were levelled against leading members who were not Xhosa-speaking, and excluded Xhosa-speaking leaders like Tennyson Makiwane'.<sup>50</sup>

Matthews viewed the bulk of accusations against individual leaders as exaggerated. Even before Hani's release, he said, there was discontent in the camps, possibly instigated, in some cases, by opponents of the movement. 'One Bonga [Thami], and another one who later turned out to have been a spy, stirred up all sorts of things; that leaders are travelling up and down in the world, and nothing is happening. Later, when Hani was released, a memo of grievances was drafted, and this would make sense to people who have been training and training, but never getting to fight. Accusations against people like Kotane were unfounded, and these people exploited Kotane's absence in hospital to vilify him,' according to Matthews.<sup>51</sup> However, the overwhelming majority of cadres who associated themselves with Hani's memorandum were

48 Karis and Gerhart, 1997, p 34.

49 Interview with Mavuso Msimang, SADET Oral History Project.

50 Karis and Gerhart, 1997.

588 51 Interview with Joe Matthews.

loyal members of the movement who felt genuinely aggrieved by the situation in the camps and the seeming ineffectiveness of the military campaign.

A memorandum from Ben Turok, a member of the SACP based in Dar es Salaam, supported Hani's criticism of the leadership. Seen together with the detailed response of Matthews, 'the two statements convey the complex interplay of material, diplomatic, political and psychological problems facing the ANC at the end of its first decade in exile'.<sup>52</sup> Tambo was evidently aware of the discontent in the camps and called a meeting at the Kwa-Ndlovu camp to address the concerns of MK cadres. He made a strong call for widespread consultation on the future of the organisation, and the leadership proposed that these consultations should culminate in a representative meeting, where formal decisions about the organisation could be made. According to Matthews, a huge effort was made to be as inclusive as possible. 'Letters were sent to everybody, those in MK, those outside MK, representatives in different parts of the world ... literally every individual abroad was contacted.'<sup>53</sup> Years later, the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued the following statement:

The preparations for the conference were perhaps the most remarkable that any exile movement has undertaken. A six-month period of intense, uninhibited and democratic discussion was encouraged. Literally scores of individuals and collective written memoranda and other contributions had been submitted. In other words, it was perhaps the most representative and the most democratic ANC assembly since the days of legality. Just as the pressure for the conference clearly came from the rank-and-file and the cadres in the camps, so it was the same groups that were the prime influence on the decisions that finally emerged.<sup>54</sup>

The NEC made clear its intention that 'the conference must be the climax of a campaign of discussion, criticisms and proposals covering all aspects of our work. Only the interests of our security should limit the scope of our preparatory work'.<sup>55</sup> In a February 1969 directive dealing with preparations for the conference, the leadership explained that 'the object of the campaign is to ensure democratic participation of the whole liberatory movement in proposals and criticisms designed to revolutionise the style of work and effectiveness of our organisation'. In pursuit of these objectives, the organisation also hoped to achieve 'unanimity for future action'.<sup>56</sup> The March directive was in a similar vein:

The conference combines the characteristics of the 1965 and 1966 conferences, bringing together militants who constitute the entire spectrum of

<sup>52</sup> Karis and Gerhart, 1997, p 35. Both statements are reprinted in this volume.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Joe Matthews.

<sup>54</sup> SACP CC, 1976, p 29.

<sup>55</sup> ANC, *Directive Concerning Preparation for Conference*, 18 February 1969.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

the progressive and revolutionary forces within our movement, for a down-to-earth appraisal of every aspect of our liberation struggle as led by the African National Congress. We are faced with a great challenge to overthrow the most powerful state in Africa and replace it with a democratic people's state. To do this requires the total mobilisation of millions of our people. Radical changes are required in our machinery and style of work to enable us to accomplish the tasks that lie ahead. This conference must fashion the instruments that will enable us to achieve a further spurt forward towards the great goal of our movement.

It was with these exhortations in mind, and against the backdrop of the intense debates that followed the Wankie campaign, that delegates assembled in Morogoro to chart a way forward for the Congress movement. However, the leadership's claim that it had convened a fully representative forum was somewhat undermined by the exclusion of Hani, who was not only a leading cadre and a strong critic of the leadership, but whose memorandum had triggered the consultative process that led to the conference.

### The conference in progress

The ANC leadership was clear about what issues required resolution. According to Matthews, delegates at Morogoro had to consider:

Whether the organisation had a really non-racial approach. That was a big issue. What do you do when you have the Indian community, the white comrades and so on, and they were not in the leadership, or in leadership positions. So there were really two aspects: to deal with the various grievances that people had, but also to analyse the South African situation and see how we should organise ourselves to expand the struggle.<sup>57</sup>

Considerable attention was given to analysis of the international situation and especially the balance of political forces in South Africa. To this end, the NEC invited presentations on 'a number of issues facing our movement from a number of experts'.<sup>58</sup> Many of these papers were drafted by leading Communist Party members such as Joe Slovo, Joe Matthews and Jack Simons. For example, the conference's preparatory committee asked Simons to prepare a document on *The Situation at Home in the Political, Economic and Social Spheres*.<sup>59</sup> He also wrote a brief document on the state of trade unions, which contained suggestions about the role SACTU should play in the movement.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Joe Matthews.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from Alfred Nzo to Jack Simons, 3 March 1969, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, UWC.

590 <sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Slovo and Matthews drafted two of the key documents at the conference, namely, *Strategy and Tactics* and *The Revolutionary Programme* (the Freedom Charter). By the time the conference began, a number of detailed position papers had been produced in the quest to set a radical framework for the ANC. For Matthews, an underlying premise of the conference was to reiterate that 'the organisation [ANC] was not founded as a solidarity organisation in exile. You had to make it a proper instrument for organising and leading a revolutionary struggle, and that meant the methods in which it was organised would have to change'.<sup>60</sup>

But even as the ANC prepared to embark on a more radical course, the political context within which it operated, at least at an official or diplomatic level, took a moderate turn. Two weeks before the conference, 14 independent Eastern and Central African countries came out in support of the Lusaka Manifesto, which proposed a political solution to the problems facing southern Africa. Zambia and Tanzania, the ANC's staunchest allies in the region, were responsible for drafting the resolution without consulting either the ANC or the PAC. Of particular concern to those preparing to meet at Morogoro was the fact that the manifesto adopted a more conciliatory tone towards the South African government.<sup>61</sup> The manifesto, which was later adopted by the UN General Assembly, suggested a diplomatic solution to the wars that were taking place in southern Africa. It 'emphasised the desirability of a negotiated end to apartheid, and offered "some compromise on the timing of change" so long as South Africa accepted the principles of human equality and dignity'.<sup>62</sup>

The ANC opposed the manifesto but did not make its objections public, as it did not want to antagonise those countries that harboured its military and political cadres. However, relations between the ANC and its hosts in the region became increasingly strained as a result. This was particularly true of the ruling Party in Tanzania (TANU), which ordered the ANC in July 1969 to vacate its Kongwa camp. Despite these setbacks, the liberation movements continued to enjoy political support across the continent, as was evident when the OAU summit in 1969 voted against dialogue with the South African government.<sup>63</sup>

The changing regional situation did not seem to have a direct influence on the proceedings or mood of the ANC's conference. In fact, senior representatives of both TANU and the OAU attended as observers.<sup>64</sup> JB Marks chaired the

60 Interview with Joe Matthews.

61 Karis and Gerhart, 1997, p 34.

62 Karis and Gerhart, quoting Nathan Shamuyarira, 'The Dangers of the Lusaka Manifesto', *The African Review*, Dar es Salaam, 1 (1), March 1971. The manifesto is reproduced in Martin Minoque and Judith Malloy, *African Aims and Attitudes: Selected Documents*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1974, pp 267-73.

63 Maren Seboe, *A State of Exile: The ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe in Angola, 1976-1989*, MA dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, 2002, pp 38-42.

64 *Communique*, undated, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, p 13.3, UWC.

conference, assisted by Moses Mabhida. The central role played by Party members was indicative of the political tone, with papers presented by Duma Nokwe on *International Affairs*, Joe Matthews on *An Analysis of the Freedom Charter* and Joe Slovo on *Strategy and Tactics*.

The NEC's political report offered a general analysis of the socio-economic and political situation at 'home', describing the South African government as a 'white fascist regime' that had 'acquired all the aggressive features of an imperialist state'.<sup>65</sup> The document included a balance sheet of international and local political forces, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of the global liberation movements. A salient feature of the report was its strong association with the anti-imperialist forces, particularly the anti-colonial struggles in Africa. 'The struggle in South Africa,' the report proclaimed, 'is intimately and inextricably bound with the struggle and developments in Africa – historically, politically and economically. The victories and reverses of the struggle in other parts of the continent are as much ours in South Africa as [they are] to those of the rest of Africa.'<sup>66</sup> The ANC unapologetically pinned its colours to the mast of the international anti-imperialist movement:

The pillars of the anti-imperialist movement are the Soviet Union, and the socialist states, in alliance with the progressive states in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the revolutionary liberation movements in countries which are still under colonial or white minority rule, and the democratic forces in the imperialist countries themselves. The anti-imperialist movement is based on the fact that the destinies of all peoples struggling against imperialism are interlinked and inextricably interwoven. The African National Congress and the oppressed and exploited peoples of South Africa, together with all genuine democrats, are an integral part of the anti-imperialist movement of the world.<sup>67</sup>

This strident tone was carried through to the keynote policy document of the conference, namely *Strategy and Tactics*. The opening paragraph proclaimed: 'The struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa is taking place within an international context of transition to the socialist system, the breakdown of the colonial system as a result of national liberation and socialist revolutions, and the fight for social and economic progress by the people of the whole world.'<sup>68</sup> Both documents bore the ideological imprint of the Communist Party. The *Strategy and Tactics* document was crafted along the lines of the Party's analysis of South Africa as representing 'Colonialism of a Special Type' and its programme of 'National Democratic Revolution'. The document grappled with

65 *Political Report of the National Executive Committee to Consultative Conference of the ANC – Morogoro, April 1969*, pp 8, 23, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, p 13.3, UWC.

66 *Ibid*, p 19.

67 *Ibid*, p 12.

68 *Forward to Freedom: Documents on the National Policies of the African National Congress of South Africa*, 'Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress', p 3.

some of the most important and vexing issues facing the ANC, including the role of the armed struggle, the relationship between the political and military elements of the struggle, the relationship between the internal and the external struggle, the international context of the ANC struggle and the role of the working class.

*Strategy and Tactics* raised seizure of power by military means as a major objective of the struggle, questioned the conditions under which an insurrection could occur and argued that, 'given certain basic factors, both international and local, the actual armed struggle or guerrilla warfare can be made, and having begun, can steadily develop conditions for the future all-out war that will eventually lead to the conquest of power'.<sup>69</sup> The central role of the armed struggle, and thus the decision to embark on the strategy, were reaffirmed. On the vexing matter of the relationship between the political and military components of the struggle, the document was equally blunt:

When [we] talk of revolutionary armed struggle, [we] are talking of political struggle by means that include the use of military force, even though once force as a tactic is introduced, it has the most far-reaching consequences on every aspect [of our] activities. It is important to emphasise this, because our movement must reject all manifestations of militarism that separate armed people's struggle from its political context.<sup>70</sup>

The departure point was: 'The primacy of the political leadership is unchallenged and supreme, and all revolutionary formations and levels (whether armed or not) are subordinate to this leadership.' Secondly, active mass support was perceived as the lifeblood of the struggle, and military efforts had to take account of this.<sup>71</sup> The role of armed struggle had been a source of contention, especially within the ranks of the Party, since the decision to launch MK. The initial concept drew inspiration from the Cuban revolution, and specifically Che Guevara's seminal book on that struggle, *Guerrilla Warfare*. His so-called 'foco theory' posited the notion that, through military confrontations with the ruling regime, small groups of armed guerrillas could spark a revolt among the oppressed and exploited masses. The ANC's Operation Mayibuye guidelines echoed this idea:

The objective military conditions in which the movement finds itself make the possibility of a general uprising, leading to direct military struggle, an unlikely one. Rather, as in Cuba, the general uprising must be sparked by organised and well-prepared guerrilla operations, during the course of which the masses of the people will be drawn in and armed.<sup>72</sup>

69 Ibid, p 6.

70 Ibid, p 8.

71 Ibid, p 9.

72 See [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/mayibuye.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/mayibuye.html), Operation Mayibuye.

*Strategy and Tactics* thus marked an important shift in the concept in both the Party and the ANC of the role of armed struggle and its relationship to the development of a mass movement inside the country. According to Matthews, certain amendments were made to the paper before the conference:

The strategy document had been prepared mainly by Slovo and had been corrected by Duma and myself. For example, there was a very popular notion at the time, coming from the book by Che Guevara on guerrilla warfare. Che challenged the transitional notion that you cannot have a revolution unless the objective conditions are right to organise such a revolution. Che Guevara said you can't wait for the right objective conditions, you can subjectively take a decision to embark on a revolutionary struggle when the objective conditions are not well.<sup>73</sup>

The African masses were defined as 'the main force for liberation', and the paper pointed out that any strategic aim always had to emphasise the national character of the liberation struggle. This involved 'a stimulation and deepening of national confidence, national pride and national assertiveness, and this national liberation struggle will pave a way for the national democratic revolution' which would not only include political liberation, but also 'destroy existing social and economic relationships':

The main content of the present stage of the South African revolution is the national liberation of the largest and most oppressed group – the African people. This strategic aim must govern every aspect of our struggle, whether it be in the formulation of policy or the creation of structures.<sup>74</sup>

The two-phase approach of the SACP was clearly evident. In addition, the document spelled out the role of 'other races' in the struggle:

Whatever instruments are created to give expression to the unity of the liberation drive, they must accommodate two fundamental propositions: firstly, they must not be ambiguous on the question of the primary role of the most oppressed African masses, and secondly, those belonging to other oppressed groups and those few white revolutionaries who show themselves ready to make common cause with our aspirations, must be fully integrated on the basis of individual equality.<sup>75</sup>

In addressing both the movement's concerns about the position of 'non-Africans' as members of the ANC or as leading figures in the movement, and

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Joe Matthews. It is not clear where these changes were made. Slovo's draft and the final version of 'Strategy and Tactics' are virtually identical.

<sup>74</sup> 'Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress', p 13.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p 15.

the state's propaganda message that the Congress Alliance was dominated by 'non-African communists', the *Strategy and Tactics* paper declared:

Equality of participation in our national front does not mean a mechanical parity between the various national groups. Not only would this amount to inequality (again at the expense of the majority) but it would lend flavour to the slander which our enemies are ever ready to spread of a multi-racial alliance dominated by minority groups.

The final question posed by *Strategy and Tactics* asked: 'Is there a special role for the working class in our national struggles?' The answer was:

It is historically understandable that the doubly oppressed and doubly exploited working class constitutes a distinct and reinforcing layer of our liberation and socialism, and does not stand in conflict with the national interest. Its militancy and political consciousness as a revolutionary class will play no small part in our victory and in the construction of a real people's South Africa.<sup>76</sup>

In a clear reference to the SACP's programme of nationalisation of the economy, the document added:

In our country – more than in any other part of the oppressed world – it is inconceivable for liberation to have meaning without a return of the wealth of the land to the people as a whole. It is therefore a fundamental feature of our strategy that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy. To allow existing economic forces to retain their interests intact, is to feed the root of racial supremacy, and does not represent even the shadow of liberation. Our drive towards national emancipation is, therefore, in a very real way bound up with economic emancipation.<sup>77</sup>

The conference's analysis of the Freedom Charter, prepared by Joe Matthews, was even more explicit regarding the movement's objectives:

Today, the African National Congress and its allies are engaged in an armed struggle for the overthrow of the racist regime. In its place, the ANC will establish a democratic state along the lines indicated in the Freedom Charter. The Charter may require elaboration of its revolutionary message. But what is even more meaningful, it requires to be achieved and put into practice. This cannot be done until state power has been seized from the fascist South African government and transferred to the revolutionary forces led by the ANC.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p 17.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p16.

<sup>78</sup> *Forward to Freedom: Documents on the National Policies of the African National Congress of South Africa*, 'Revolutionary Programme of the African National Congress – An Analysis of the Freedom Charter', p 21.

The conference resolved that 'the working class and its organisations constitute a fundamental foundation for the success of the revolution, [and] the SACTU and trade union organisations should be strengthened at home and abroad'.<sup>79</sup> It ended with a clarion call:

The revolutionary struggle is in its infancy. It will be a long, hard road. To accomplish the glorious task of the revolution, maximum unity among all national groups and revolutionary forces must be created and maintained. All South African patriots, whatever their race, must take their place in the revolution under the banner of the African National Congress. Forward to revolution and the victory of the people's programme of liberation!<sup>80</sup>

At Morogoro, resolutions were adopted that introduced far-reaching organisational change to both the ANC and the Congress Alliance. The NEC was reduced in size and a Revolutionary Council was established. These changes were intended to accommodate the interests of important constituencies and to synchronise the political programme and structure of the movement. The Revolutionary Council reflected the overall leadership of Africans, but also accommodated other ethnic groups. The changes also placed Party members in strategically critical positions as far as both political and military operations were concerned.

The reduction in the size of the NEC was seen as necessary to consolidate the organisation's dual operations. Due to external co-opting, the NEC had grown unwieldy, and the personal misconduct of some members had been severely criticised by the rank and file, which was starting to lose confidence in the leadership.<sup>81</sup> Traditionally, the NEC had consisted of 23 African members, and the conference reduced this to nine Africans.<sup>82</sup> The post-Morogoro NEC consisted of Oliver Tambo, Alfred Nzo (who replaced Nokwe as secretary general), JB Marks, Moses Mabhida, Moses Kotane, Joe Matthews, Thomas Nkobi, Flag Boshielo and Mzwai Piliso. A distinctive feature of the restructuring of the movement was the absence of women from any of the new structures. The conference acknowledged this shortcoming, noting that 'insufficient attention has been paid to the proper organisation of the youth and students, and women's sections of the ANC'. It resolved that 'proper provision must be made in the ANC for personnel and resources to be allocated to this vital task'.<sup>83</sup>

The Revolutionary Council was created to 'concentrate entirely on the armed struggle, in all its aspects, and of course it could include everybody'.<sup>84</sup>

79 *Communique*, undated, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, p 13.3, UWC.

80 'Analysis of the Freedom Charter', p 27.

81 SACP CC, 1976, p 29.

82 Karis and Gerhart, 1997, p 36.

83 *Communique*, undated, Mayibuye Archives, Simons Papers, p 13.3, UWC.

84 Interview with Joe Matthews.

Its responsibility was to integrate political and military strategy for the struggle, and, unlike the NEC, it included Indian, white and coloured members. Tambo was the chairman, Dadoo the vice-chairman, Matthews the secretary and Slovo and September were members.<sup>85</sup> Apart from Tambo, the members were all leading lights in the Communist Party. For Matthews, this represented a formalisation of the long-standing relationship between the ANC and the SACP.<sup>86</sup> Although the Communist Party could not formally join the Congress Alliance in the mid-1950s because of its banning, many communists were at the heart of the alliance through their roles in component organisations.

The creation of the Revolutionary Council was also a recognition of the important political and strategic role the Party could play in the armed struggle. Josiah Jele argued that the failure of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns dominated the conference, 'and one of the problems realised was the lack of political preparation for campaigns. On all military campaigns, including one in Niassa province [in which Jele was involved] and another in Cabo Delgado, Frelimo did not do the political groundwork'.<sup>87</sup> Similar criticism was levelled at the ANC's Military High Command, headed by Joe Modise, and the existing command structure was dismantled in favour of the Revolutionary Council, whose functions were primarily political. By placing the military wing under direct political supervision, the ANC hoped to avoid the mistakes committed during the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns.

A common criticism of the conference was that it heralded SACP domination of the ANC in exile. For example, Ellis and Sechaba argued that, 'even before the meeting was convened, there was intense manoeuvring between different groups. The Party hierarchy, led by Kotane as the general secretary, JB Marks, Slovo and Matthews, put its weight behind critics of the ANC leadership, canvassing for a clean sweep of the National Executive Committee'.<sup>88</sup> Their argument was reinforced by the roles played by known communists within the ANC leadership. For instance, Matthews and Duma were closely involved in the planning and coordination of the conference, and Marks acted as chairman. But Karis and Gerhart suggest that 'although documents adopted at the conference testify to the intellectual predominance of their communist drafters, by 1969 the relationship between leaders of the SACP and of the ANC had become so symbiotic that "triumph" and "control" do not convey its complex reciprocal nature and commonness of purpose'.<sup>89</sup> According to Shubin, however, the ANC remained an independent liberation movement, with

85 Karis and Gerhart, 1997, p 36. Interview with Josiah Jele, conducted by Howard Barrell, Lusaka, 12 August 1989.

86 Interview with Joe Matthews.

87 Interview with Josiah 'Joe' Jele.

88 Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile*, James Currey, London, 1992.

89 Karis and Gerhart, 1997, p 37.

immense material support from Moscow, and continued to pursue a nationalist struggle.<sup>90</sup>

Before the idea of the conference was even mooted, Tambo had intended promoting young cadres to senior and executive ANC bodies. James April recalled that Tambo was especially keen to promote Mavuso Msimang and Basil February.<sup>91</sup> The death of the latter in the Wankie campaign robbed Tambo of one of his favourite young cadres. Chris Hani was also considered for promotion to the top echelons, but both he and Msimang were excluded from the NEC, albeit for very different reasons. Msimang declined nomination because he decided to go back to school and further his education. 'It was difficult for me to see people preparing themselves for the future while I was concentrating solely on the movement. There were people that I thought were more capable, and could do much better.' According to April, Tambo opposed Hani's nomination because he was 'still disillusioned with the memorandum and decided not to promote any young member to the NEC'.

The relationship between leaders based in Africa and those in other countries was also seriously debated at Morogoro. There was some concern that many of the most capable leaders were deployed in Europe, when the real struggle was taking place in Africa. In Msimang's view, people like Alfred Nzo and Joe Slovo seemed to be 'condemned to doing solidarity campaigns in Europe'.<sup>92</sup> The conference thus emphasised the need to strengthen support at home.

Slovo described the conference as having had 'the potential of disintegrating'. Criticism of the leadership was acute, and the debate was acrimonious at times. The stakes were high, as the movement to which all the delegates had dedicated their lives was clearly at a crossroads. Tambo even threatened to resign because he believed that much of the criticism directed at leaders was unfounded and unfair. In Slovo's opinion, it was 'the brilliance of JB Marks that held everyone together and prevented the organisation from being reduced to conflict and divisions'. That the conference ended with a high degree of agreement and a set of resolutions that pointed the way forward, bore testimony to delegates' commitment to the struggle.

For Tambo, it was the presence of MK cadres, 'their mood of revolutionary urgency, their voice and their demands which prevailed at Morogoro; their insistence on priority for the armed struggle and the mobilisation of all revolutionaries at home and abroad, their demand for changed structures to meet the needs of the new phase of the revolution, for new and higher standards of political and personal conduct of all in the movement'. But, he added, the conference was also a forum for 'unrestricted criticism, in which all the main aspects of the movement's programme and strategy, its leadership structure

90 Shubin, 1999.

91 Interview with Josiah Jele.

598 92 Interview with Mavuso Msimang.

and style of work, were examined and tested in light of the overriding demands of the present phase of struggle and the national democratic revolution'.<sup>93</sup> Speaking at the Kabwe conference in 1985, Tambo said the most significant results of the Morogoro conference were the reorientation of the ANC towards the prosecution and intensification of the struggle inside South Africa; the restoration and reinforcement of unity within the Congress Alliance; and the integration of all revolutionaries within the ranks of the ANC's External Mission.<sup>94</sup> In Slovo's view, Morogoro also asserted the right of the rank and file to have a say in who would lead them, and proclaimed that the bulk of the alliance's resources and efforts should be devoted to work inside the country, at a time when the ANC's underground structures were virtually non-existent and MK had not fired a single shot on South African soil.<sup>95</sup>

The ANC's movement towards open membership was one of caution and often heated dispute throughout the 1960s, and it took time to acknowledge that neither strident Africanism nor the underlying multiracial principles of the Congress Alliance were viable options for strategic advance.<sup>96</sup> But the ANC had to tread carefully, always wary of the ideological force of hardcore Africanists among its members (and political rivals), and never more so than during the 1970s, which marked the rise of Black Consciousness.

93 OR Tambo, 'Moulding the Revolution: The Morogoro Conference of the African National Congress, April 25–May 1, 1969', *The African Communist*, 38, Third Quarter, 1969, pp 16-7.

94 OR Tambo, 'The Eyes of our People are Focused on this Conference', *Sechaba*, October 1985, p 4.

95 *The African Communist*, 95, Fourth Quarter 1983, p 88.

96 J Marcum, 'The Exile Condition and Revolutionary Effectiveness: Southern African Liberation Movements', in Potholm, Christian P and Dale, Richard (eds), *Southern Africa in Perspective*, Free Press, New York and London, 1972, pp 262-75; T Lodge, 'The Politics of Exile', *Third World Quarterly*, 9 (1), January 1987b, pp 1-27.