

**No Easy Walk:**

**BUILDING DIPLOMACY IN THE HISTORY OF THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS  
OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
1945-1987**



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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities at the University of  
KwaZulu-Natal**

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## *Declaration*

This study represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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**Narissa Ramdhani**  
November 2008

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**Professor Catherine E. Burns**  
Supervisor  
November 2008

**This dissertation is dedicated to the two men who have influenced  
and brought such strength into my life. My late father,  
Harrynarain Ramdhani and my partner, Mashen Ramanand.**

*Abstract*  
*No Easy Walk:*  
**Building Diplomacy in the History of the  
Relationship between the African National  
Congress of South Africa and the United States Of  
America, 1945-1987**

*by*

*Narissa Ramdhani*

*Supervised by: Dr Catherine E Burns  
Department of History*

This dissertation examines the attempts of the African National Congress to establish a diplomatic relationship with the United States of America from 1945-1987. By exploring critical stages in the history of the movement, I will argue that the ANC responded in a positive manner to adverse and trying circumstances and events. The ANC far from being a victim was an agency of change. This was evident through its changing strategy of moving the freedom struggle to the international stage. This was undertaken as a mechanism to ensure its long term survival.

Embarking on this strategy exposed Africa's oldest liberation movement to the intricacies and intrigues that characterised international diplomacy which in turn was governed by global developments such as the Cold War and the positioning of the Soviet Union within this. Starting on this road meant confronting the policies of different US administrations from Kennedy to Reagan. All of these administrations positioned their international policies, including their Africa policy within the context of international global developments such as the Cold War.

A related and pertinent area that will be examined will be that of African diplomacy. My goal in examining this area will be to demonstrate that the ANC had no influence on African diplomatic developments on the continent. This reluctant recognition of this strengthened the imperative for a relationship with a powerful global player such as the USA.

By dwelling at some length on the Reagan years, I argue that in spite of the intensity of repression in South Africa and the hostility of the Reagan administration, ironically this was "the" time of opportunity for the ANC. The 1980s witnessed the realisation of the movement's goals of securing the recognition of the USA. Many political dynamics characterising the USA's political landscape during this time, as well as that of the Soviet Union will be explored to demonstrate how the ANC succeeded in its endeavours by the late 1980s.

Throughout this era, the USA Solidarity network played a critical role in shaping USA state policy towards the African National Congress and South Africa, resulting in recognition being granted to the ANC. The role of this Network, particularly on the East Atlantic Coast, will be interrogated with the aim of demonstrating how the power of this group had grown in the USA.

The thesis also explores the complex historiographical tensions associated with a study of this nature, including the type of historical knowledge produced in the wake of democracy in South Africa in 1994. The study explores both the content and the politics of archival evidence gathered in and outside of South Africa.

The major finding of this thesis is that the ANC's relationship with the USA was contested and contingent. The ANC appeared by 2003 to have had a long and distinguished relationship with the USA. This thesis explores just how fragile the relationship was in the 1945-1987 period.

## *A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s*

The research and writing of this dissertation has involved a ten year journey which has been characterised by the development of meaningful relationships, the unfolding of a string of unforeseen events and many life-changing lessons. These have included the death of my father and the loss of all of my research data during an armed robbery. But I thank God for watching over me and giving me the strength to persevere and complete this study.

Perhaps the most significant lesson I have drawn from this exercise is the relevance of the spirit of *Ubuntu* and how it pervaded every ounce of my work. For while the conclusion of this study marks the punctuation of many years of arduous, yet rewarding research, this dissertation has really been a collective effort, involving individuals and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, political activists, colleagues and supervisors, employers, friends and family- without whom this work would most certainly not have reached this point. Thanks are due embarrassingly to so many individuals of whom only a few can be mentioned here.

But by far, one of the greatest debts goes to Catherine Burns, my supervisor. I remember having met Dr. Burns for the first time at the conference "*The Future of the Past*" held at the University of the Western Cape in July 1996. During that meeting we engaged on numerous issues and I knew instinctively then that I found a supervisor who would guide me well. My instincts were as they say 'on the mark.' Undertaking an academic project of such a magnitude after a long sabbatical from this world was extremely difficult. But having my work supervised by Catherine helped ease me into the process and being 'attached' to her in this manner became such a privilege. Her gentle, yet passionate style helped in my development of academic skills necessary for the production of a study of this nature, with the result that I could attribute my academic maturity purely to her efforts. Her scholarly views and stimulating criticism of historical style have added new and exciting layers to my research efforts. I hope that I have inherited a component of her academic strength so that it may serve me well in future academic efforts. But her compassion, understanding, unwavering support and friendship have all helped me through the very many difficult and trying times that have characterised the period of my research. She has taught me the meaning of perseverance with the result that I have succeeded in realising my goal of completing a study of ANC/USA Relations. She has built in me the confidence needed for such a study. This has meant so much to me and for that I shall be eternally grateful to you. Thank You Catherine.

Others who have inspired me along the way include Shaheed Vawda and Anand Singh from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I vividly remember their many visits to my offices at the former University of Durban-Westville, during which they did not hesitate to voice their displeasure at the lack of desired results in respect of the dissertation. To realise the result, I was always assured of their help and support. I thank them for this

inspiration. I always remembered this in the concluding stages of my study. But the stern and wise words of an icon of South African struggle, Phyllis Naidoo, will remain with me for the rest of my life. Her candour at what she sometimes considered an illogical and ill-constructed view, in relation to my arguments, was so welcome and often helped bring me down to earth. The lessons I take from her life's experience will serve me well.

I shall not forget the camaraderie of the faculty and students of the Department of Historical Studies of UKZN. Whether at seminars, or just during my visits to the Department, they were always so upbeat, often urging me on with words of encouragement and support and offers of help. To be part of such a caring group made me feel so special. Being away from academia for so long had caused me to forget the value of such warm and stimulating environments. Many thanks to those like Keith Breckenridge, Julie Parle and Sandi Thomson.

I would also like to acknowledge the numerous institutions and repositories here in South Africa as well as in the USA for assistance rendered during the course of my research activities. I need to particularly note the assistance of staff at South African institutions which include the William Cullen Library at Wits University, the Department of Foreign Affairs at the Union Buildings, the ANC Archives at the University of Fort Hare and at ANC Headquarters in Johannesburg, and the Documentation Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In the USA, staff of the following institutions were extremely helpful: The National Archives in Washington D.C., Manuscripts and Archives at Yale University, the National Security Archive at George Washington University, The John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library in Boston, the Amistad Centre in New Orleans and the TransAfrica Archives in Washington D.C. What I found particularly encouraging was the enthusiasm of staff to assist and their instantaneous agreement to help me tackle certain research dilemmas, especially those related to closed or sensitive material.

Thanks are also due to the many South African and USA activists who were so agreeable to be interviewed for this study. Sitting with individuals who played such an important role in our quest for freedom, many of whom who had not set foot in our country, and recording their testimonies as they shared their thoughts about their work and their visions for the new democracy, was an unforgettable experience for me. My exposure to individuals such as Jennifer Davis, Richard Knight, William Minter, Muzwai Muntali, Sylvia Hill and Cecelie Counts taught me lessons about the value of commitment, passion and belief. These lessons will forever guide me as I navigate what I may sometimes consider insurmountable challenges of my life.

To my many friends in the USA, I am so grateful to have such been blessed with such a wonderful network. While I have been privileged to have enjoyed such friendships, I have also been given the benefit of their immense intellectual presence. Many like Gail Gerhart, Thomas Karis, Robert Edgar and Enuga Reddy have gone the extra mile to furnish me with research leads nationally and internationally as well as unique research data-all aimed at ensuring that I accomplished my goals. This friendship has sustained itself from the 1980s when I lived in the USA and from which time they persuaded me

of the need to document the history of the freedom struggle, and hence exposed me to the activist, exile and solidarity network in the USA. I remember also the clandestine meetings with many of these individuals who shared with me the most shocking and intriguing information in verbal or written forms, much of which was used in this study.

But it was Professors Brenda Berrian, Beverly Harris-Schenz and Michael Schenz who threw down the gauntlet and challenged me to complete the dissertation by 2008. It was that extremely windy day, two years ago when I sat in my Pretoria apartment with Beverly and Michael, here on one of their many visits from Pittsburgh, that this challenge was issued with a great sense of seriousness. Simplistically put, I found myself at the receiving end of words of wisdom from seasoned academic friends who did not mince their thoughts. Little did they realise what an effect their 'sermon' had on me and how it changed my life. From then on, nothing deterred me from the goal of completing my dissertation in 2008. I was offered a further incentive-a personal visit to South Africa to help celebrate the conclusion of this project. So my dear friends from Pittsburgh, I thank you profusely for this. I needed that wake-up call. But the friendship of another dear family friend has inspired me since we first met at the University of Connecticut in the 1980s. Professor Amii-Omara Otunnu's advice on the need to undertake a doctoral study was heeded and I am sure he will be pleased with the outcome.

As if this was not enough, pressure of another form came from friends in a different part of the USA. Recognising the need for me to complete the final stages of my writing in a neutral environment, Mark Kornbluh, supported by Kurt Dewhurst, Peter Limb, Dave Wiley and Marsha Macdowell-all of Michigan, generously offered me a fellowship at Michigan State University to make this possible. And it was this final gesture from my friends on the other side of the Atlantic that make the completion of this dissertation possible. Given this, I owe yet another great debt of gratitude to Mark and the group.

To the staff and the Board of the Ifa Lethu foundation, my home for the last three years, thank you for your faith in my abilities and for giving me the space and opportunity to complete the final stage of my writing. My appreciation goes to the staff of the Foundation, Carolyn Schoeman and Brown Maaba, who despite their punishing schedules, were always willing to step back, offer advice and assist. To my Chair, Dr. Mamphele Rampele and other Board members, your support for my academic work and enthusiasm to see me reach my related goals, is poignantly recognised.

It has been said that friends are like stars. One does not always see them, but they are there. This clearly holds true for my South African friends such as Ben Magubane, Nadia Minty, Tor Sellstrom, Mohammed Tikly and Sarojini Naidoo and the many who shall remain nameless and who have provided me with the moral and professional support I needed. I knew I could always call on them for assistance in any form. Knowing this has helped me considerably through the many personal and professional crises experienced during the writing of this dissertation.

As I complete this dissertation, I cannot but reflect on the lessons learned from my time with that icon of struggle, Nelson Rolihlala Mandela as they guided my arguments and assessments of international politics. For example, accompanying Madiba on his first visit to Robben Island after his release, upon the occasion of the reunion of political prisoners, I could not resist one question. “How can you be so forgiving?” I asked. What followed was the most precious lesson on the futility of bitterness and its repercussions for world peace. On another occasion, while at his house in Houghton, I sought his views on my choice of topic for the dissertation. With his usual candour, he was eager to share his views and suggested an alternative. While I was unable to heed his advice, I did promise to inform him once I completed this work and he left me with the warning that I should not delay completion.

In the same vein, I have drawn much inspiration and guidance during the journey from powerful women such as Frene Ginwala. Her candour regarding my work, my political interpretations and my writing style, provided that catalyst that was vital for me to overcome challenges and obstacles that I confronted during the processes of data interpretation and writing. The lesson imparted by Frene will certainly serve any future academic endeavours well.

Finally this work would have been possible without the support, love and encouragement of my dear family. Having my sister Sujata, her husband Ravin, my nephews Shivar and Nikil ‘bunk’ over at our home during their household renovation, was such a pleasure. Having been deprived of a normal family set-up for almost 25 years, their presence at our home brought much chaos but also much love and joy as well. I remember writing the draft of the conclusion to this study during their stay. It was a momentous time, overhearing all the arguments, yet being so inspired by a real family environment. It made my writing so pleasurable. To them I say thank you for bringing normality into my rather dysfunctional lifestyle.

Coming home to Durban every weekend from Pretoria meant lots of mother’s love and good food. More importantly, in spite of the numerous tirades from all sectors regarding the time scale for my study, Serah, my mother was ever willing to pacify me and urge me to go on. Her confidence in my abilities and her pride at my achievements, no matter how insignificant, have all been so important to me. How does one adequately thank a mother for being that beacon of hope? I find myself challenged by this. But the consolation is that the completion of my dissertation will put such a smile on her face- and that itself makes this dissertation priceless.

Thanking the other important people in my life, my daughter Shahista, my partner Mashen and my late father, Harrynarain, has been deliberately left for the final segment of my acknowledgements. From the age of two months to her adult years, Shahista has lived through the numerous adventures undertaken by her mum. But as she grew into a young and intelligent young woman, with her characteristic sense of maturity and compassion she encouraged me to live these dreams, even offering much of her wisdom and guidance to her mother. I value this with a sense of pride. Having a technologically

challenged mother was no help either as much of the technological work that went into this dissertation was undertaken by her. So the completion of this work is as much a relief for her as it is for me. I recall her many pleas for me to complete this work before she completed her grade 12 year. This did not happen. Then came another desperate plea for me to graduate before she did. I am sure I can now safely accede to that request. Thank you Shahista.

I confronted countless challenges while writing this dissertation. But none can rival that presented by the opportunity to thank my beloved and devoted partner, Mashen. Like Shahista, he encouraged me to live my dreams and to strike out in directions like no other. Whether hare-brained or not, all my initiatives and schemes received his unstinting support, even when others refused to support me. But he believed that his place on this earth was intended to remove all obstacles from my path through life. After many years of marriage, and especially while writing the dissertation, I was inclined to believe this. From the setting up of a comfortable study environment, to assistance with research, to the creation of what he considered the appropriate 'vibe', he left no stone unturned to make my research endeavours viable. I remember the many bottles of wine brought from South Africa, India and Chile-and they certainly helped. For all of this and for countless other reasons, I have dedicated this work to him.

This study is also dedicated to my late father, Harrynarain Ramdhani who continues to inspire me even after his death. Though a horticulturist by profession, his historical perspectives always found relevance in all of my work. His concern that I complete this study without further delay required that I advise him on my progress on a regular basis. Those times spent in vigorous debate are really missed. But I take comfort knowing that his spirit pervades this entire dissertation.

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## *List of Abbreviations*

AAI	African American Institute
AAPC	All Africa Peoples Conference
AFSAR	Americans for South African Resistance
AID	Agency for International Development
ANC	African National Congress
ACOA	American Committee on Africa
AME	African Methodist Episcopalian
CAA	Council on African Affairs
CAAA	Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act
CAAC	Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique
FLS	Front Line States
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FSAM	Free South African Movement
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
IDASA	Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa
IUEF	International University Exchange Fund
JFK	John Fitzgerald. Kennedy

KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
NEC	National Executive Committee
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSSM	National Security Study Memorandum
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PUSH	People United to Save Humanity
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
PAFMECA	Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa
RENAMO	Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana
SA	South Africa
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADET	South African Democracy and Education Trust
SAHC	South African History Archive
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SANEF	South African National Editor's Forum
SARP	Southern African Research Programme
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SSRC	Soweto Student's Representative Council
SWANU	South West African National Union

SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UAR	United Arab Republic
UCONN	University of Connecticut
UDW	University of Durban-Westville
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UN	United Nations
UNITA	Uniao pela Independencia Total de Angola.
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USIA	United States Information Agency
USSALEP	United States-South Africa Leadership Programme
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCC	World Council of Churches

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## *Preface*

This study has its origins in many debates that took place between myself and other Southern African experts who participated in Leonard Thompson's Southern Africa Research Programme at Yale University in the early 1990s. I remember the dinners that followed these programmes during which everyone would share their views on the South African dilemma and how the USA should react. I also recall certain very tense evenings as the Yale programme attracted a cross section of academics, including individuals from the right of the spectrum and even one individual whom we suspected of reporting our views to the South African intelligence authorities. This resulted in many heated discussions, all which guided any future academic endeavour I was planning to undertake.

What was obvious by the time I finally began this work was that the activities and strategies of the African National Congress of South Africa from its inception, were all important components of a remarkable historical record of the organisation's contribution towards liberation politics and the subsequent birth of a democratic South Africa. The centrality of the ANC to the history of the freedom struggle clearly made its contribution a necessary component of historical scrutiny and assessment. A study of the ANC comprised an intrinsic part of understanding our society and of understanding how transition came about. But what was also essential to such an examination was a scrutiny of the network of foreign relationships that were sustained by the movement during the underground period. Therefore in undertaking this dissertation I expected to research this area with specific interest in a study of how the ANC navigated perilous terrain in its attempts to establish a diplomatic relationship with the United States of America.

Yet when I began work on this dissertation, studies documenting the liberation struggle of the ANC were conspicuous by their absence in this country. A number of reasons existed to account for these perceptions. Firstly, resources that hitherto existed in South Africa condemned the role of liberation movements and its members into virtual extinction. Secondly, organisations such as the ANC did not disclose in any public fashion, their role in the struggle. After 1994, the climate which necessitated the need for such secrecy disappeared, with the result that documents related to the ANC's own work, became freely available

With the signing of Executive Orders 145687 and 145688 in 1994 by former USA President William Clinton, previously classified records were declassified. The list of available records included all un-reviewed World War 11 records, post 1945 collections (including files relating to the Cold War) and National Security Files. These newly released documents contained vital information documenting US policy towards international liberation movements during the post World War 11 years, especially in

regard to her relations with the eastern Bloc countries-and how they influenced her policy and perceptions towards South Africa and the ANC.

In view of the availability of unique and previously unavailable files, documentary, oral and other media data, a host of areas related to South Africa's freedom struggle were ready for scrutiny. This attracted my interest even further. Having spent all those years in the USA, my interest in the area of ANC/USA was guided by an enthusiasm to correct misconceptions and the official rhetoric that existed in regards to this relationship, thus contributing to the literature and debates on the political history of liberation movements in South Africa and globally. But from a more sentimental perspective, the attempts of the ANC to establish a relationship with the most powerful global player, was a poignant story, characterised by a host of contradictions and ambiguities that needed to be explored.

Given the international dimension that pervades my study; three principal theories framed my research. They included the following; firstly that the history of South Africa is equally the history of whites as it is of blacks, secondly that the role of 'human agency' in the shaping of South Africa is vital and thirdly that the historical forces prevalent in the period were instrumental in determining the course of events under review.

The greatest contribution of my study will be found in its attempt to chart a course for the future of post apartheid South African foreign relations with the USA. For I hold the view that how South Africa develops in the future relates to what has transpired in the past. What has happened to the ANC and USA in the approximately five decades before 1994, clearly impacts upon future developments in the South Africa/USA relationship and on the future of all South Africans, within a global context. Though this dissertation, I expect to add to academic debates on international politics and in so doing, I hope that I will be able to make a meaningful contribution to the development of South Africa's intellectual capital.

## ME THE OPPRESSED MAN

Let me make myself clear,  
I'm not against you as a whiteman,  
But against you as the oppressor,  
Me, the oppressed man.

You attacked me,  
Whilst in Angola,  
You assassinated me,  
Whilst in Matola,  
You killed me,  
Whilst in Maseru,  
You murdered me,  
Whilst in Swaziland,  
Me, the oppressed man.  
Whether here or abroad,  
You shall no more celebrate my flesh,  
Neither shall you touch me again,  
Me, the oppressed man.

I'm the soul that escaped from the destroyed life,  
To fill the gap left by our martyrs,  
Coming back with fire,  
And yet more fire,  
For freedom is my inner being,  
Me the oppressed man.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous. If you Want to Know me-Voices From SOMAFCO (Alice. Lovedale Press, 1999). 45.

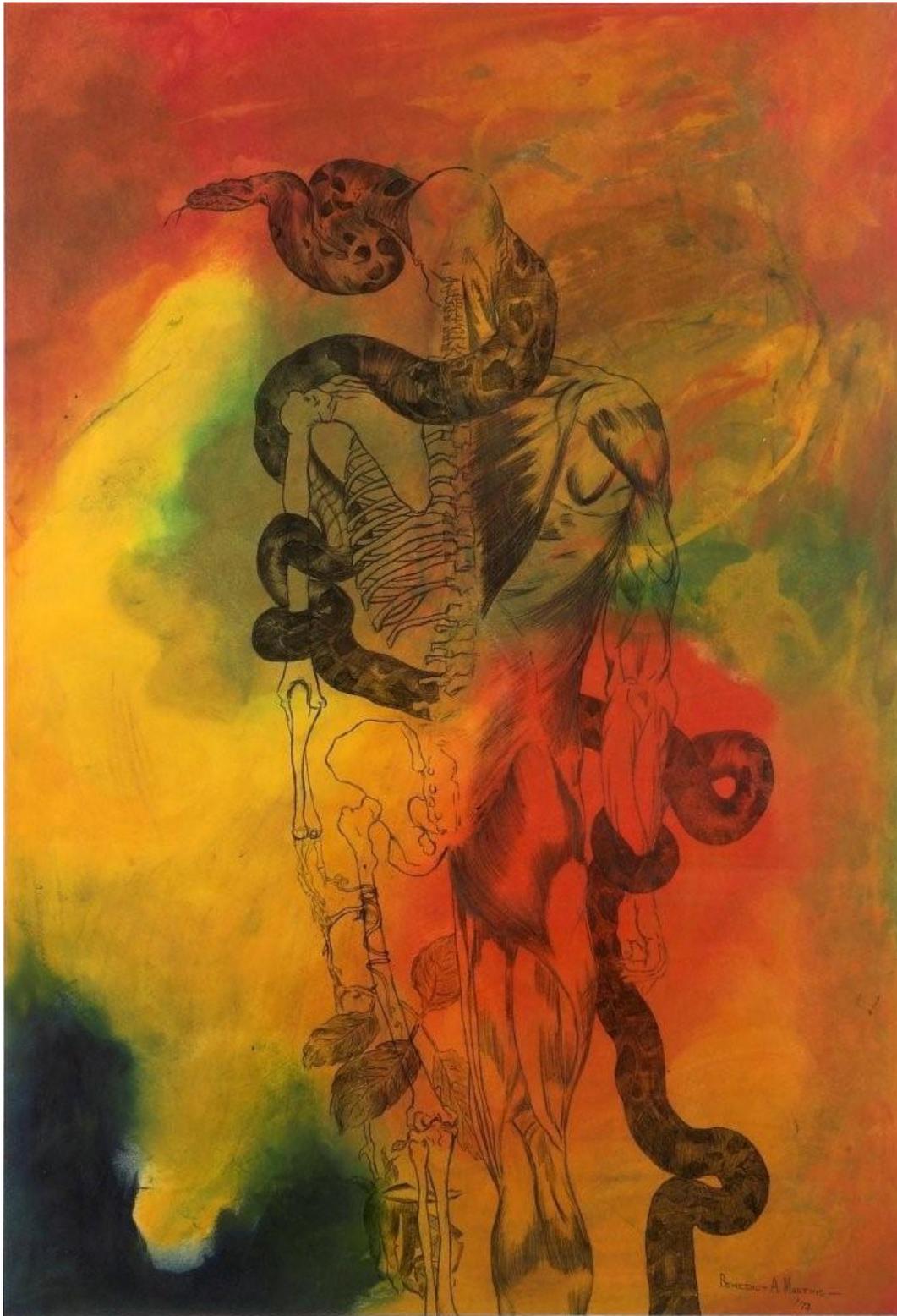


Image 1: Painting by Benedict Dikobe Martins entitled Apartheid Kills (1974).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Benedict Martins was an activist who was sent to prison on Robben Island where he remained from 1983-1990, under the Internal Security Act. He studied art and used it to as a medium of resistance. In his painting Apartheid Kills, the snake symbolises the stranglehold of apartheid. Dirkie Offringer. *Walking Tall without Fear: 24 Artists from the Struggle era* (Johannesburg. Jacklyn Publishers, 2007). Courtesy of the Ifa Lethu Foundation

*Introduction*

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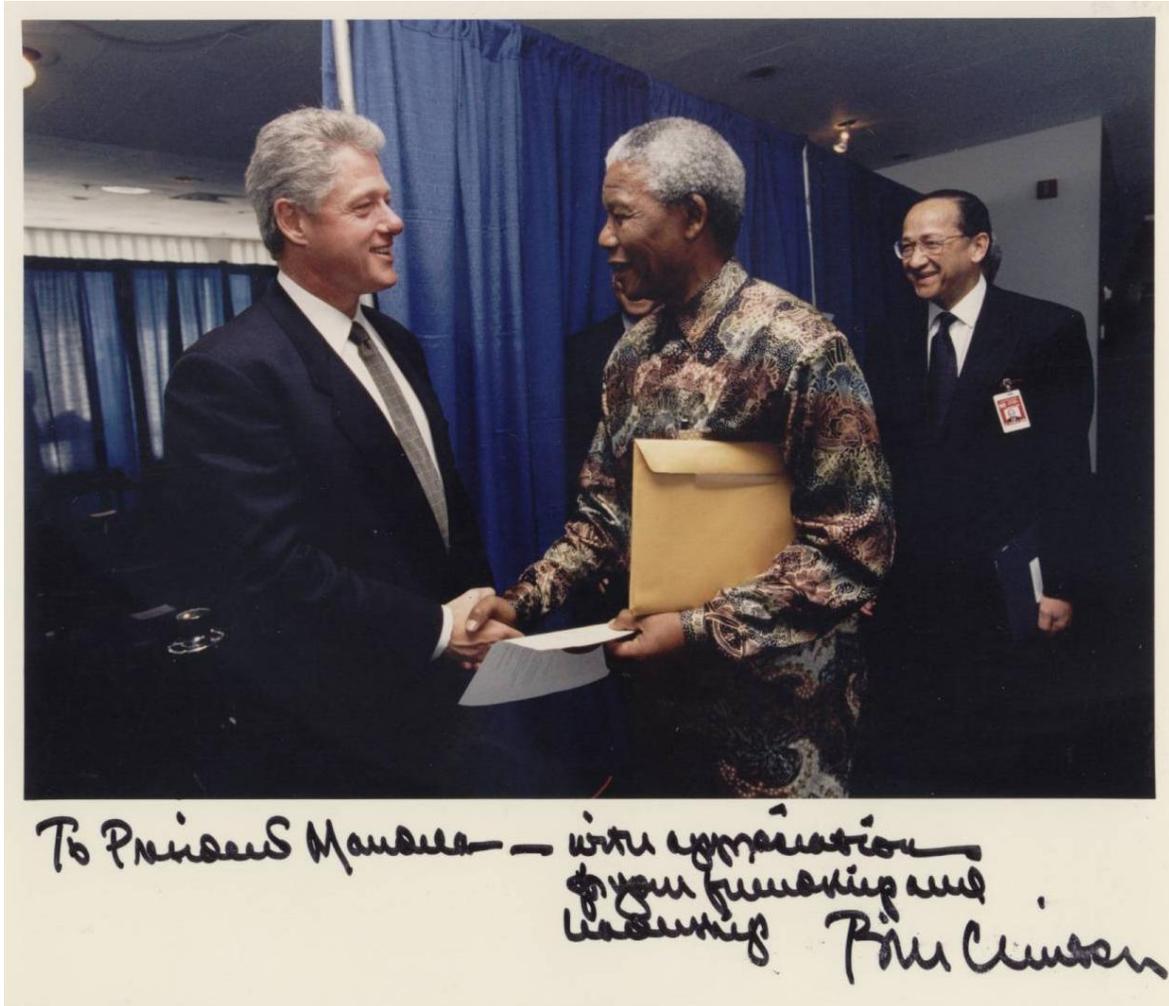


Image 2: President Nelson Mandela meeting President William Clinton at the White House on 22 October 1995.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Courtesy ANC Archives.

Documents are the primary sources of history; they are the means by which later generations draw close to historical events and enter into thoughts, fears and hopes of the past.<sup>2</sup>

Research for this dissertation began in 1998 and continued into 2008. It has been a very long journey marked by changing perceptions and the relentless yet critical drive to pick up data, in any form, along the way and to understand the complex issues at stake in the African National Congress's attempts to develop a relationship with the United States of America. But during this time three events that spoke volumes about how the relationship between the US (United States) State and the African National Congress (ANC) had undergone a vast transformation, had occurred. They included the 85<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations of former South African President Nelson Mandela in 2003, the tragedy that befell the United States of America (USA) in 2001 and the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor to then South African President Mandela in 1998.

On the 18 July 2003, Mandela celebrated his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday amidst great pomp and ceremony at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa. Present at the birthday celebration were many wealthy Americans representing the most powerful segments of American society. These included Mr. Rockefeller and former President Bill Clinton, as guest of honour. As I watched the many foreign dignitaries rush to eagerly clasp the hand of Nelson Mandela and listened to Mr. Clinton's poignant reflections on the personal nature of his relationship with our former President, I became mesmerized by the glamour of the evening. Yet it was my partner who pondered rather emotionally and spontaneously the historic resonances of the moment, alluding to my study of the ANC and the USA, which could draw significantly from such an occasion. A few days later I discovered that this moment was also not lost on reporter Humphey Tyler, but for different reasons. Tyler provided a rather candid assessment of this event by reminding us that while this occasion paid tribute to Mandela, it was not too many years ago that the US State Department described Mr. Mandela as being the leader of an organization that was not just a 'terrorist organisation', but also 'one of the most notorious terrorist groups' in the world."<sup>3</sup> What

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<sup>2</sup> John F. Kennedy (19 January 1961) in Ronald E. Whealan. *Historical Materials in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library* (Boston. John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, 1993 i.

<sup>3</sup> *The Daily News* (11 August 2003).

Tyler could not then predict that Mandela's name was to remain on the USA's terror watch until July 2008 when he turned 90 years.<sup>4</sup>

This description of Mandela as a 'terrorist' was used at a time when the South African apartheid state, then at its most objectionable, was considered a friend and "favoured ally" of the United States of America. Hence this occasion of the birthday celebration is symbolic as it illustrates the long and difficult journey taken by the African National Congress, together with its allies in the United States, from the 1950s, in bringing us to this point of the relationship between the movement and the US state. That the ANC's attempts to develop a relationship with the USA state and to gain the necessary recognition finally paid off was epitomized by the close friendship between Clinton, a former US President and Mandela, an African liberation leader in 2003.

Just two years before, on 11 September 2001, a great tragedy had befallen the people of the United States of America as they became victims of global terrorism. Four commercial jetliners crashed into American landmarks and on American soil, killing thousands of people. This day was described by then Catholic Pontiff, Pope John Paul as "a dark day in the history of humanity."<sup>5</sup> Thabo Mbeki, then the South Africa President, viewed this atrocity "with a deep sense of shame which should engulf all of mankind."<sup>6</sup> In an edited extract from an article appearing in *ANC Today*, the movement's online newspaper, the South African President had the following to say:

All human beings everywhere, including us, will surely be engulfed by a deep sense of shame that human society is still capable of producing people who can deliberately plan and execute a crime as heinous as that perpetrated in the United States earlier this week. We must say that as a civilised people we condemn this act of terrorism unreservedly and will do everything we can to ensure that our society does not give birth to this ugly and repugnant formations that committed willful mass murder in New York and Washington.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Tribune* (29 June 2008). On 27 June 2008, the US Senate approved legislation to remove Mandela and other ANC leaders from the US government's terror watch list. This arose through the intervention of Condoleezza Rice, US Secretary of State, who in April initiated the process by calling upon the Senate committee to remove these restrictions acknowledging them as "a rather embarrassing matter..."

<sup>5</sup> *The Sunday Times* (16 September 2001).

<sup>6</sup> *ANC Today* (14 September 2001).

<sup>7</sup> *ANC Today* (14 September 2001).

In using these examples, I want to be perfectly clear that I am not trying to be nostalgic or to poignantly reflect on the relationship between the ANC and USA. Instead I am being realistic about how international developments have caused perceptions and views to change amongst world and religious leaders so that they begin to provide evidence of what was different before this time. This will also strengthen my argument that forty five years ago it would have been unthinkable, that a leader of the African National Congress (ANC) and an ex- “terrorist”-in his capacity as President of a free and democratic Republic of South Africa- would be sympathising with the President and peoples of the United States of America for falling victim to international terrorism. Indeed, this shows that the ANC had come a long way as an international player as it transformed hostile perceptions of it as a pariah “terrorist” organization, to glorious praise now occupying a stable niche in the community of nations.

On the 23 September 1998, President Nelson Mandela became the first African recipient of the US Congressional Gold Medal on Capitol Hill, Washington. This was the highest honour that the US could give to anyone and it was presented by the President of the USA. Yet looking back over the turbulent history that characterised ANC/USA relations over the past eight decades, this significant gesture on the part of the US government would have been unthinkable. All of these events bear testimony to the developments that characterized the long journey involved in reaching this point.

I need to emphasise that all of the above did not arise out of any degree of generosity on the part of the US State but grew out of the constant engagement of the African National Congress since its formation in 1912, with USA stakeholders, to develop a foreign policy with the United States of America.<sup>8</sup> This strategy was adopted when, for reasons that will be interrogated later, attempts by the ANC to function as a successful liberation organization within South Africa became distressing and difficult. For its continued survival the movement recognized the importance of moving the battle to the global arena. This will be demonstrated extensively in Chapter One. But the question that begs to be answered is that

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<sup>8</sup> The ANC realized the importance of developing relationships with many countries. But for the purposes of my study, I will only focus on its attempts to develop foreign relations with the USA.

which tries to shed light on when the contours of such a relationship began to take shape-an area also addressed in my opening chapter. But through the themes of the other chapters I have set out to explore how the ANC worked to shape and influence views in the United States of America, particularly in regards to the State apparatus, with the result that it secured victory on the international battleground.

### ***Personal Legacies***

As many personal legacies inform my work and shape my study and I find it necessary to make this admission at the outset. Instead of making any apologies for this, I will rather boldly admit that these legacies have provided critical learning curves and these clearly position me to be aware of possible distortions along the way. Precisely because I am aware of these other dynamics, I have endeavoured to ensure that my judgements and integrity have not been compromised in any way. Before proceeding, I need to explain how these personal legacies shaped my work and the views that are reflected in this study.

In 1993, at the invitation of the ANC, I returned to South Africa after almost a decade in the United States of America to help the organization set up its archive.<sup>9</sup> I had left South Africa in the mid-1980s to escape the repressive political climate. While in the USA, I spent much of my graduate study training as a public historian. But I was able to blend this training with political work for the African National Congress in the form of anti-apartheid activism with anti-apartheid movements especially on the east coast of the USA. This will expanded upon later in the chapter. Therefore when I embarked on this study, I set out to answer certain key questions, many of which emanated from my experiences in the United States of America and which shaped my thought processes upon my return to the country many years later. These questions included the following: how important were the ANC's foreign relations for its survival as a liberation organisation; how big and influential was the ANC in the USA; how important was the link between the movement and civil society in promoting the work of the ANC; to what extent did American policy help shape ANC policy towards the US; was there any evidence of clandestine manoeuvring between the ANC and representatives of

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<sup>9</sup> The invitation to return came during my stint as a Fellow at Yale University.

the US government and finally was Reagan's policy of Constructive engagement successful in isolating the ANC.

Having left the country and my family at the height of apartheid repression created many emotional dilemmas for me.<sup>10</sup> But returning to South Africa at a time when the political scene was about to undergo its most exciting transformation yet was a wondrous period indeed for many exiles and activists. The country was about to embark on its maiden journey to a truly democratic state. For an activist such as myself, the opportunity to return to the country of my birth and to be allowed to cast my first vote in a democratic South Africa was a dream that we harboured for many decades. No persuasion was required.

A year after my return, South Africa held its first free elections in the country on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1994. The President of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela, was elected as the State President of the new Democracy. In the USA, the state department hailed this transition as a miracle, accomplished without civil war and violence. Further, policymakers saw this as a successful lesson that could be replicated in other conflict riddled areas of the globe. The reaction of policymakers in Washington was well documented by former American Ambassador to South Africa, Princeton Lyman in his study *Partner to History: The US Role in South Africa's Transition to Democracy*. Lyman was the Ambassador during South Africa's critical negotiation process and hence documented what he considered to be the USA's role in this process.<sup>11</sup>

For the activists of the anti-apartheid organizations and other solidarity organisations, the birth of this democracy was considered a victory not just for South Africa's oppressed majority, but also for the African National Congress and for the solidarity organizations themselves. This was the unanimous view that was echoed through all interviews undertaken with US activists for this project. Their efforts to shape US state policy and hence isolate the

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<sup>10</sup> Through the intervention of the University of Connecticut, I succeeded in enrolling in a graduate programme at the university which offered me a home and financial and emotional support for many years. The institution ultimately formed an educational partnership with the ANC in 1999.

<sup>11</sup> See Princeton N. Lyman. *Partner to History: The US role in South Africa's transition to Democracy* (Washington DC. Institute of Peace Press. 2002). 384. The Personal papers of Princeton Lyman, which document his role in the negotiation process, were deposited with the Ifa Lethu Foundation in South Africa in 2007. They were not consulted for this study as they are currently in the processing stage.

apartheid state had paid off. The joint efforts which resulted from the successful alliance of the ANC with these organisations paid off.<sup>12</sup>

That my work was cut out for me as clear. This was evident from the political environment in which I found myself and the many public pleas made by prominent ANC leadership figures and the key figures in the ANC Archives project on the importance of capturing the histories of countries and societies undergoing transformation. These included then ANC President Nelson Mandela and Dr. Frene Ginwala, who was Head of the ANC's Research Unit after her post exile return and later was appointed as the Chair of the ANC Archives Committee and then the first Speaker of the National Assembly in the country's first democratic Parliament. These pleas included the call of Mandela, by now the President of the Republic of South Africa, who in his message to the *Conference On the beginning of the Armed struggle in South Africa*, held on 1 December 1995, pleaded with South Africans to "paint a true multi-dimensional picture of the noble and selfless efforts of our patriots to make South Africa the modern miracle we are all proud of today"<sup>13</sup> Continuing in the same vein, Ginwala added her voice on the on the need to capture our marginalized history when she candidly pointed out that attempts to capture social memory "will help to provide our voice and necessary perspectives on events and developments, without which there can be no reconciliation, no reconstruction and no national unity."<sup>14</sup>

I feel the importance of alluding to such perspectives for it was this environment that strengthened my belief on the need to have South Africans involved in this process of capturing South Africa's past and this recognition planted the seed for this study which I decided to undertake on the relationship between the ANC and USA.

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<sup>12</sup> Interviews with activists such as Salih Booker of the African Action Group (Washington, 5 December 2002), William Minter of the Africa Focus Group (Washington, 20 November 2002), and Richard Knight New York, 11 December 2002), provided evidence of the views of civil society on the democratic elections in South Africa. Folder 4. For a full list of interviewees see Appendix 1.

<sup>13</sup> Message from President Mandela, 1 December 1995, University of the Western Cape, Nelson Mandela Papers, Folder 130, Conference Speeches, ANC Archives, University of Fort Hare.

<sup>14</sup> Frene Ginwala's statement at the official opening of the ANC Archives at the University of Fort Hare on 17 March 1996. As the Archivist of the ANC, I was involved in the planning of this event. Hence I was present at the opening of the Archives where this statement was presented. As copies of Ginwala's speech was circulated at the event, I was able to obtain a copy for my personal files. Folder 1.

But whether as an activist historian, an archivist for the African National Congress or as an agent of history, I believed that I was well placed to involve myself in this process of historical production which would include the creation of data, research material and the writing of liberation history. But this undertaking meant navigating the critical issue of the type of history that I was expected to produce in the absence of records documenting the liberation struggle, in a new democracy.

### ***The Archival and Historical Scenes: Controlling Knowledge Production in a Post Apartheid South Africa***

Having made that claim which many may wish to contest, I consider it necessary at this point to move away from my writing challenges and to briefly assess the historical and archival scenes in the early years of South Africa's democracy. This also requires that I carefully work my role into this in relation to the views of scholars and archivists such as Carolyn Hamilton, David W. Cohen, Verne Harris and Jacques Derrida, thus urging me to draw on a huge emerging field of historical scholarship.

That archives and history were areas of contestation and turmoil required no proof. But evidence was provided by the numerous serious debates which took place among historians, social historians and heritage professionals in these years. We were all required to undertake an introspective analysis of our trades and such introspection also helped shaped my work and my perceptions. For I again feel the need to remind the reader that as the ANC's Archivist I was required to be the producer of knowledge of the ANC's struggle and in later years I was going to find myself in the enviable position of interpreting the knowledge I helped create. It was this tension that I would be required to balance delicately in my study.

When I returned to South Africa, I found that the Archive and History had become sites of deep political and intellectual struggle, while the sword of democles dangled dangerously over the issue of who controlled knowledge production in South Africa. The issue of 'power' began to increasingly rear its complex head. For the committed post apartheid archivist, the profession was now laden with many risks. Of particular concern was the risk associated

with the heavy dependence on selection of material for preservation. Yet in an attempt to showcase the value of their trade, archivists have too often and readily promoted the slogan “Archives hold the memory of a Nation.”<sup>15</sup>

For noted archival professionals such as Verne Harris who have navigated the profession through the oppressive apartheid years, into the new democracy and through transformation, such assertions were shortsighted and failed to make allowance for the roles of libraries and museums, memories and other related repositories. But at the same time, Harris has also rightly argued that while this slogan may not be an accurate portrayal of their work, archivists are indeed “active shapers of social memory.”<sup>16</sup>

Another prominent South African archivist, Michele Pickover was candid in pointing to a further problem of the archival profession in the country in those early years. She accused archivists of only collecting research material “once the pervading shift in social/ideological values has taken place—that is, when it is safe to do so.”<sup>17</sup> Aside from initiatives such as those by the Mayibuye Centre and the South African History Archives (SAHA), there were no other noteworthy attempts in the early 1990s to collect material on the country’s freedom struggle. While the resistance groups inside South Africa were producing a variety of material, for obvious reasons they were being destroyed or lost.

The profession also came under scrutiny by the post modernists who argued that good history could only be written by connecting the written documents to the wider arena of ‘Living Heritage’ which was seen to include public memory in the form of music, dance, oral history, monuments, art and art objects—in essence what is collectively known as material culture. I found such contentions valuable as they clearly gave space to context and content and thus allowed us to provide an inclusive record of South Africa’s past.

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<sup>15</sup> Verne Harris: “Redefining Archives in South Africa: Public Archives and Society in transition: 1990-1996”, at *The Future of the Past: The Production of History in a Changing South Africa..* University of Western Cape, July 1996. Verne Harris was an Archivist at the National Archives of South Africa and played an important role in the early conceptualisations of the ANC Archive. He has also been credited with helping transform the archival profession in South Africa. He currently heads the Nelson Mandela Centre for Popular Memory.

<sup>16</sup> Harris: “Redefining Archives in South Africa: Public Archives and Society in transition: 1990-1996.

<sup>17</sup> Michele Pickover. “I want, I want, I want: Accessing and Controlling the Past in South Africa in the 1990s,” Paper presented at the *Future of the Past Conference*, July 1996. Michele Pickover, the Head of Historical Papers at Wits University injected activism into the archival profession.

But another paradigm was furnished by the deconstructionists who maintained that given the unique nature of the events and issues covered by the archiving process, this latter order was a complex one. The attraction of this ‘deconstructionist paradigm’ could be discerned in its accommodation of issues such as contestation which were considered as vital areas for the archive. Harris has also appropriately pointed to the value of the deconstructionist’s model when he explained that deconstruction “lets the stranger in,” and in so doing, enables one to open oneself to what is the ‘other.’<sup>18</sup> Such strategies make it feasible to contest less contested western frameworks, and to confront the challenges posed by indigenous knowledge systems which include memory and orality. In turn this would ensure success firstly in the process of deconstructing dominant beliefs and secondly of building archival engagements which find relevance and application in a post apartheid society which has emerged from centuries marked by oppression of colonialism or apartheid. I found myself very comfortable with the views of this group. This model found appeal in my work and hence shaped my decision to look upon my work as an archivist as being far more complex than that of a mere record-keeper.

As the ANC’s archivist and at the same time, as one embarking on historical interrogation of the relationship between the ANC and the United States, a country from which I had just returned and one that offered me a home for many difficult years, I tried to protect my integrity by ensuring that I did not become a prisoner of my own selection criteria nor of that of the organization that I served.<sup>19</sup> I was also exposed to the wisdom of the post modernists and deconstructionists and progressive South African archivists-as alluded to in my previous discussion. Since the collection and generation of archival research material is usually considered to be self regulating and peculiar, and archivists are often accused of ‘trying to play god’ or of contributing to historical research known to find favour with certain ideological trends, I was considerably cautious in my approaches to recording South Africa’s past. Moreover, as a historian striving for integrity, my role in recreating South

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<sup>18</sup> Verne Harris: “Nascence, Renaissance and the Archive in South Africa.” SASA National Conference, 11-13 September 2000. 6.

<sup>19</sup> My graduate study in Public History resulted in a certification programme for Archival management as well. This meant that I had acquired formal tertiary training in a programme not available for Black South Africans in the country. Having such a specialized skilled and having later acquired further work experience as a consultant at Yale University to its South African political collections, made me a suitable candidate to take custodianship of the country’s national treasure-the ANC Archives.

Africa's freedom struggle, required a continuous self analysis, evaluation and criticism-a process which gave me a sense of assurance and confidence with which to take on the extraordinary challenges.

South Africa celebrated her decade of freedom a few years ago. But writing during this time in our country's history has clearly altered many of my perceptions and arguments since I started out on this journey many years ago. For this time represents another political moment in my life as a collector of information and as a producer of history, and one that enables me to add another layer to my historical analysis of the relationship between the ANC and the USA. I vividly recall participating in a timeous conference entitled "The Future of the Past: The Production of History in a Changing South Africa", which was held at the University of the Western Cape in July of 1996, and where similar dilemmas endured scrutiny through the many papers presented and discussions that took place.

Academic disciplines were thrown into turmoil on the issue of historical production at that particular time in a post apartheid society. It was David Cohen who appropriately endeavoured to grapple with such experiences by alluding to the complexities presented by "time and temporalities in the production of history."<sup>20</sup> I was also struck by the many discussions on the issue of power relations in the production of history and related consensus on the need for struggle histories of South Africa to be produced-thus serving the interests of the majority. For me, these competing senses of time continued to present a major challenge to my work. Further to this was the challenge presented by the growing recognition of the role of activist historians in the nation building process and in the production of a nation building history.

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<sup>20</sup> D.W. Cohen, "Silences of the Living: Orations of the Dead: Further Thoughts on the Production of History", paper presented at the Conference on "The Future of the Past: The Production of History in a Changing South Africa", University of Western Cape, 10-12 July 1996.

## ***The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Production of a Nation Building History***

Such a nation building history allowed for the voices of the ‘ordinary people’ to be heard. This was clearly reflected through the archive of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), “a body which represented the fruit of protracted negotiations between politicians that culminated in the Promotion of the National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995.” This Act established a “commission which was to provide, as complete a picture as possible, of the nature, causes and extent of gross human rights violations of human rights, committed between 1 March 1960 and 5 December 1993.”<sup>21</sup> The TRC was thus charged, in the first instance, with awakening the new democracy’s memory of its protracted birth pangs during the apartheid era. It was to hold public hearings throughout the country in which the victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses could tell their stories. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was appointed the Chairperson of the Commission.

This commission was more successful than other truth commissions such as those in Chile and Argentina, and has often served as a model of effective conflict resolution. The value of the archive generated by this commission justifies dwelling at some length on the work of this body.<sup>22</sup> Serving as a public confessional made up only a part of the TRC’s duty, the others included determining the fate and whereabouts of victims of violations; the granting of amnesty to persons who made full disclosures of all the relevant facts related to acts committed; affording victims an opportunity to relate to the violations they suffered; the adoption of measures aimed at granting of reparations to, and the rehabilitation and the restoration of human and civil dignity to these victims; reporting to the nation about such

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<sup>21</sup> [http://www.belvoir.com.au/uploads/amajuba\\_notesfinal.pdf](http://www.belvoir.com.au/uploads/amajuba_notesfinal.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> See Jorge Correa. “Dealing with Past Human Rights Violations: The Chilean Case after Dictatorship.” *The Notre Dame Law Review*. Volume 67, Issue 5 (1992); Mark Elsalaco. “Truth Commissions for Chile and El Salvador: A Report and Assessment” in *Human Rights Quarterly*. Volume 16 (1994). Antjie Krog. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the new South Africa* (Random House. Johannesburg, 1998); Kader Asmal and Ronald Suresh Roberts. *Reconciliation Through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid’s Criminal Governance* (Cape Town. David Philip, 1998). I was able to establish the effectiveness of the different truth commissions through my involvement as South Africa’s representative on the United Nation’s Expert’s Group on Security Archives during 1995-1996. The input provided by the Chilean Representative, Alejandro Gonzalez Poblete and the Brazilian representative, Eliana Mendoca, for the final report strengthened my view on the success of the South African truth Commission. Working documents and drafts for the commission are in my possession and can be located in Folder 3.

violations, the granting of reparations and most importantly the recommendation of measures to prevent human rights violations in the future.<sup>23</sup>

To those like Professor Njabulo Ndebele, who was present when the first round of the TRC hearings took place in East London, there were many ironies to be registered. He referred to a quote that Archbishop Desmond Tutu made on the day the hearings began. “The country has taken the right course,” Tutu added, “in the process of healing to hear these stories. Very few of us can be the same today as we were on Monday.”<sup>24</sup>

This was the first time that I (like Professor Ndebele) remember the TRC testimonies being referred to as ‘stories’. And within months after the hearings began, the facts of human rights abuses began emerging. So victims and perpetrators came to the commission to tell their stories. Each victim’s statement was subject to factual scrutiny.

It is interesting that the stories of the TRC exposed not only previously silenced voices, but also methods employed in silencing them. That is why the revelation of these methods received so much attention. Who can forget those testimonies of victims? I remember as do many South Africans. For example, Professor Njabulo alluded to his memories of stories of how peoples’ hands were cut off and put into jars; how women were forced to watch their partners being tortured, how a father watched in horror while security police raped his daughter.<sup>25</sup> I recalled the details as well and could go on and on.

The importance of the TRC was that through the act which brought it into being, everyone and anyone, regardless of previous social status was subject to the subpoena to relate all they knew. Hence the archive that grew out of this commission carried the voices of the ordinary

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<sup>23</sup> Father Michael Lapsley. “Confronting the Past and Creating the Future: The Road to truth, Healing and Forgiveness.” (4 May 1998). Public Lecture presented at the New York School for Social Research.

<sup>24</sup> Njabulo Ndebele, “Memory, Metaphor and the Triumph of Narrative” in Sarah Nuttal and Carli Coetzee (ed.). *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (New York. Oxford University Press, 1998). 21.

<sup>25</sup> Ndebele. “Memory, Metaphor and the Triumph of Narrative.” 22

but vital people as well as those of the leaders, thus ensuring for example, that the lives of family members of leaders did not disappear.

The first five volumes of the TRC report were published in 1998 and in 2003 the completed report of the TRC was presented to the President. From the different processes, it was clear that the Commission did have many problems, which included the limitations of investigations to post 1960 crimes, the emphasis on reconciliation which encouraged victims to ‘forget the past’, the difficulty in fully exploring the complicity of South Africa’s corporate sector, the commission’s superficial treatment of women, youth and regional destabilization and the failure to prosecute the worst perpetrators of gross human rights violations.<sup>26</sup> Moreover when the report of the TRC was released in October 1998, it did not attract much support. In fact, Janet Cherry, in her study on whether the TRC was wrong about the ANC, pointed out quite candidly that “nobody liked it.”<sup>27</sup> To be more precise, she added “none of the main protagonists in the South African conflict liked the findings it made about them.”<sup>28</sup> This was specially conveyed during the special sitting of Parliament held on 25 February 1997 to debate the TRC report. This debate turned out to be emotionally charged and at times ridiculous. For example, one IFP Member of Parliament, Mr. MA Mncwango, called for the report to be “consigned to the dustbin of history.” Even the then Deputy President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, conveyed the complaints of his party by identifying “one of the central matters at issue” and that was “the erroneous determination of various actions of our liberation movement as gross violation of human rights, including the general implication that any and all military activity which results in the loss of civilian lives constitutes a gross violation of human rights.”<sup>29</sup> But despite its shortcomings, the TRC managed to effect a national reconciliation for South Africa.

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<sup>26</sup> For an analysis of the various problems see D. Posel and G. Simpson (eds.). *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg. Wits University Press, 2002); Martin Meredith. *Coming to Terms: South Africa’s Search for the Truth* (New York. Public Affairs, 1999); Terry Bell and Dumisa Ntsebeza. *Unfinished Business* (Cape Town Verso Books. 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Janet Cherry. “Just War and Just Means: Was the TRC wrong about the ANC?” in *Transformation*. Vol. 42(2000). 9.

<sup>28</sup> Cherry: “Just War and Just Means.”9.

<sup>29</sup> Joint Sitting of Both Houses of Parliament, 5 February to 26 March. *Hansard*. Republic of South Africa (1999)

Ordinary South Africans came forward to testify to the realities of life under apartheid. This is what makes this area so different, as the various reports, films and interviews allow us to comprehend the consequences of the apartheid states actions and the resulting trauma suffered by individuals. The personal stories and testimonies are important in demonstrating the conflicting demands of truth and justice with the political needs for stability and due process and how a new democratic state tried to reconcile them.

That the TRC generated a massive archive of “the ordinary people’s voices” is undeniable. And that this archive should be widely accessible so that we may be able to seek to understand its significance is undeniable. But this process was fraught with many challenges. The TRC Archive is far from open, remains scattered and frustrates researchers in their attempts to access this material. According to Verne Harris, the former Director of the South African History Archive, in 2001 the latter was denied access in terms of the Promotion to Access for Information Act (PAIA) to a range of National Archives Records about the TRC on the grounds that the records were security classified.<sup>30</sup>

The movement of the major part of the TRC Archive to the National Archives in Pretoria was undertaken with the involvement of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) because of security considerations and because of the need for security classification. Even more alarming, Harris points out, is the “uncertainty surrounding 34 boxes of ‘sensitive’ TRC records removed from TRC offices in 1999 and placed in the custody of the Department of Justice.” It has been subsequently learned that these records are with NIA and will be returned to the Department of Justice in due course. It was further learned that the records are actually in the custody of the President’s office. It has also been alleged that many TRC staff members removed organizational records when they departed. And in the case of Security Police Files, there is evidence that records seen by the TRC are now lost. This was aggravated by the attempts of one political party to withhold records from the TRC. In this case, staff of the party were instructed to deny the existence of such records.<sup>31</sup> Other parties such as the New National Party succeeded in pushing for a deletion of certain findings from

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<sup>30</sup> Harris. “Telling Truths about the TRC Archive”.  
[http://www.saha.org.za/publications/FOIP\\_5\\_2\\_Harris.pdf](http://www.saha.org.za/publications/FOIP_5_2_Harris.pdf). 17 April 2002.

<sup>31</sup> Harris. “Telling Truths about the TRC Archive.”

the TRC report while the Inkatha Freedom Party sought the legal route to challenge evidence related to its involvement in gross human rights violations.

While the main concern for me was, and remains, the safety and accessibility of such records, a range of questions arise: Why do such records have to be concealed and why do so many state agencies have to be involved? These remain a puzzle to many researchers as well. The fact that records of a process devoted to a cathartic healing of a traumatised nation should be concealed or made inaccessible is unacceptable and provides a frightening reminder of the strategies employed by the apartheid state to classify, conceal or destroy information.

Are we trying to conceal the voices and stories of the 'ordinary people'? All these dilemmas presented by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the many challenges presented by the scattered archive that it generated, shaped my perceptions of the nation building process and the production of knowledge so necessary for such a process to succeed. Were we producing knowledge to merely forget about it?

During a visit to South Africa in 1998, Jacques Derrida, the eminent French philosopher, suggested that the TRC should be understood as an 'exercise in forgetting'<sup>32</sup> While many considered this pronouncement ridiculous or even 'blasphemous', he was really making a very philosophical point that archiving, while understood to imply the process of remembering, is really designed to temporarily forget until we need to remember again. He went further to point out that when we note something on a piece of paper and place it in a pocket, we are really implementing the archival process so that we can forget about the information temporarily, but retrieve it when we need it. He was therefore suggesting that remembering and forgetting are not two different processes, but that one is informed by the other. Remembering is informed by forgetting.

So much of the TRC's work was determined by the process of selection. It had a narrow focus, it allowed only one tenth of the victims who came forward, to tell their stories, and it was hampered by internal problems and by political pressure. Many of the hearings were

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<sup>32</sup> Harris. "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An Exercise in Forgetting." <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewarticle/11441>. 3 November 2002.

conducted *in camera*, and eventually materials generated by and used by the TRC became scattered or were concealed. All of these issues, argued Verne Harris, were “dimensions of forgetting.” But then the work of the commission was guided by the principle of healing, of encouraging South Africans to tell their stories, so that their pain and hatred could be forgotten.

But as a result of the challenges presented by the process of selection, by the scattered nature of archives of the TRC, by the difficulties of gaining access to such materials and by the application of political pressure it may well be that while the TRC was implemented to help deal with the past, evidence points to a different scenario. And this is that the state would really prefer to see this process come to an end so it can get on with business as usual—in other words that the work of the commission should be forgotten. Or perhaps it would prefer that only selected work of the commission should be remembered. But then one has to remember Derrida’s warning that “what we think we have forgotten may come back through a number of ways, unpredictable ways.”<sup>33</sup> This warning has informed my attempts to produce knowledge of a crucial period of my country’s history.

### ***Communicating Knowledge of the Past in a Post Apartheid South Africa***

All of the above presented responsibilities and risks in communicating knowledge of the past in relation to this area of study, especially through the discovery of non-elite sources. This demonstrated that the ending of apartheid affected every sector of South Africa. This included our community of historians who found themselves exposed to new trends in South African historiography, new foci of attention, new interests and issues and new debates, displacing revisionist scholarship that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a reaction against pre-existing expositions and exchanges.

This was illustrated by concerns raised at the History Workshop Conference held at the University of Witwatersrand in July 1994 and entitled ‘Democracy: Popular Precedents, Popular Practice, Popular Culture.’ Addressing the final plenary session of the conference,

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<sup>33</sup> Harris. “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An Exercise in Forgetting.”

Professor Shula Marks conveyed her concern at the dwindling focus by conference delegates on historical topics. As papers appeared to have concentrated on the problems facing a post apartheid government, she felt compelled to appeal to delegates not to neglect historical research.<sup>34</sup> A further sign of crisis in the realm of radical historiography was even noted outside of South Africa. In August of the same year, the twentieth anniversary conference of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* was held at the University of York. Commenting on the conference deliberations, Paul Rich drew attention to what he believed was “a general crisis of nerve among the academic left in Southern African Studies, and its slowness to come to terms with the Post Cold War World.”<sup>35</sup> For Tim Nuttal and John Wright, the reason for this crisis was that:

South African historians were, we can now see with hindsight...caught up in the deep and narrow groove of ‘struggle history’ This point is not intended as a criticism of anti-apartheid historians...Given the political imperatives of the time, it is difficult to see how they could have done history otherwise...But the degree to which academic historians of all shades of opinion became involved in fighting political battles on the terrain of their discipline meant that when the political climate suddenly began to change, as happened from 1990, many of them, on the right and left alike, were left without clear academic agendas.<sup>36</sup>

So while from about the mid 1990s it was clear that the new South Africa needed a ‘new history’, an even more complex dilemma arose over the type of new history that was needed. Even for those of us and the rest of the exile community returning to a free South Africa, the dilemma appeared more serious. As someone determined to communicate knowledge of the past and of the struggle, of which thousands of us were so much a part, I found myself at the crossroads. But given my knowledge of USA/ANC relations, much of which was gained from experiences in both entities and my access to new archival sources, including alternate media such as memory and material culture, I believed I was well placed to participate in attempts to produce a history of a proud struggle for freedom. While I considered my attempts as visionary, I could not see myself striking off in new directions.

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<sup>34</sup> Alan Cobley. “Does Social History have a future? The Ending of Apartheid and the Recent Trends in South African Historiography.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Vol. 27. No. 3. 617.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Rich: “Is South African Radical History Becoming Irrelevant.” *South African Historical Journal* (November 1994). 191-197.

<sup>36</sup> Tim Nuttal and John Wright. “Exploring History with a Capital H.” *Current Writing*, 10, 2 (1998). 38.

Rather I saw myself as one who could successfully build on the achievements of the revisionist's tradition of historiography.

I could not break with that critical and rich tradition of historical inquiry. Hence I moved gently towards the path set by social historians by juxtaposing the role of people in exile with archives and public history. This ensured that the rich tradition of archival research would not be ruined, but instead would be allowed to engage successfully with material culture, and in so doing, lead to more fresh approaches to writing the new history of South Africa. This self reflective process was important to me in my attempts to unravel the relationship between the two countries I lived in, while at the same time ensuring that this should contribute to the domains of reconciliation and nation building in South Africa. I also considered it important to ensure that history was given its rightful place in a country which marginalized the history of the majority of its inhabitants.

When I started out to explore this relationship between Africa's oldest political movement and one of the most influential players on the global stage, I did not expect to unearth the data that I did nor did I expect to reach the conclusions which I do in this study. But, as I indicated earlier on, the competing senses of time, together with my professional and personal growth shaped my arguments and contributed to many dilemmas. Coming from the intellectual activist background, living as a ANC sympathizer in USA for many years, returning to act as the custodian of the ANC Archives and of the many Mandela gifts- all a national treasure- and at the same time, embarking on this project to produce an authentic history presented an enormous dilemma for me. But this also informed many of my arguments. Surely no apology needs to be made for this. Yet I consider it vital to acquaint readers of this work with this political link which I have tried to sincerely shed for the purposes of contributing to critical scholarship of the struggle-based intellectual tradition, with the ultimate contribution to the democratization process of this country.

### ***Early Perceptions and Influences***

But setting out on this journey way back with idealistic views and perceptions was unwise on my part. Examples of such views included that which led me to believe that the African National Congress, the liberation movement to which I had been affiliated for so many years, had not only been extremely influential in the United States of America, but that it had been solely responsible for swinging support in that country for the liberation cause in South Africa. A further view was that the ANC and the anti-apartheid network worked well together and that liberation movement was necessary for the survival of the solidarity network. But as I will demonstrate in a later chapter, evidence was to prove otherwise—that these two entities, by working in concert, were influential in swinging support. But the ANC had hitherto not awarded the necessary credit to this critical segment of USA society, this giving credence to my discovery of the complexities that characterized this relationship. But then I looked at the ANC, a political movement from a different time, as a South African activist living in the USA.

This was not unusual because I will contend that during these years I viewed events in the US from a perspective that was shaped through my presence at the many anti-apartheid rallies on the East Coast in cities such as New Haven, Hartford, Washington and Boston and on university campuses of Connecticut, Southern Connecticut, Harvard, Yale, Wesleyan, Boston and Princeton. The mood at these rallies was always euphoric and the relationship between the US activists and South Africa exiles appeared friendly, with both groups viewing the US government in a similar manner.

That the ANC always viewed itself as the orchestrator of public and state opinion in the USA was evident through the speeches of its many visiting leaders and those already resident in the country. I vividly recall the many related discussions held at the home of Professor Bernard Magubane, an exile but resident in the USA since the 1970s, and during my time at the University of Connecticut (UConn) an anthropology professor at the University.<sup>37</sup> This home became a gathering point for many South African students, exiles and activists

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<sup>37</sup> Professor Magubane took me into his home during my years at UConn and offered me the comforts of normal family life of which I was deprived during my time in the USA. For this and all that he and his family had done for me, I shall be eternally grateful.

living in the USA, as well a compulsory drop-in venue for many prominent ANC leaders visiting the country. It was here that I began to learn, engage and robustly debate with others the issue of the real power of the ANC and its influence in the world including the USA. It was here in the 1980s that I began to increasingly view the movement as extremely influential in the USA.

But what will always remain imprinted in my memory is the visit of Pallo Jordan to Yale University in 1992 during which he made a powerful plea to the university to throw its weight behind the South African struggle. In a moving speech he conveyed the power of the ANC to influence opinion in the USA in previous years. I must confess that being present at this event resulted in my experiencing such a sense of pride in being firstly a South African and secondly in being a member of the African National Congress.<sup>38</sup> But my recent research supports a view that differs from that presented by ANC leaders and members such as Pallo Jordan. While I will argue in my study that the ANC did take on a powerful global player in its attempts to isolate the South African state, my evidence supports the view that the movement cannot claim full credit for its successes in this area. This is so because the relationship between the ANC and the USA activists and movements was a symbiotic one.

My involvement in South African related activities occurred through my presence at these rallies and through work with the entities such as the ANC's foreign office in Washington, the Washington Office on Africa, American Committee on Africa, American Friends Service Committee and Lawyers for Civil Rights. Further as a participant in the Southern African Research Programme (SARP) at Yale University, I was afforded the unique opportunity to interact with and meet many prominent US activist academics who led such demonstrations or who tried to capture the South African dilemma in their writings. These included Thomas Karis, Gail Gerhart, Leonard Thompson, Irina Filatova, Enuga Reddy and Bernard Magubane. Individuals such as Reddy, Karis and Gerhart were to play an important part in shaping my views and career direction. More significantly, much of the primary research used in my study was generously provided by these same individuals who always took the

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<sup>38</sup> I was unsuccessful in trying to obtain a copy of this speech. Pallo Jordan explained that he spoke from personal notes. My reflections on this visit come from my recollections of his address at which I was present.

time from their busy schedules to send me, upon my return to SA, research from their private collections, or to answer critical questions on this area.

The press coverage in the USA of events in South Africa during my time in that country, though not extensive in my view, appeared pessimistic. In view of the increased instances of police brutality in South Africa and the greater level of unrest, followed by a resulting increase in the number of solidarity rallies, it appeared that the pressure for change needed to be stepped up. Although I recall more visits in the late 1980s from the ANC's headquarters in Lusaka by leaders such as the then ANC President Oliver Reginald Tambo, Thabo Mbeki, then Head of the ANC's Department of International Affairs, and Pallo Jordan, there was no indication that freedom was around the corner. The news that FW de Klerk had been appointed as the President to succeed PW Botha added to our gloom for the reason that he previously held office as Minister of Defense for the South African regime. So it was with shock and unpreparedness that we received news of the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela 1990.

### ***The ANC Archive Project and the Control of Information***

As alluded to earlier on, I finally returned to South Africa in 1993 to participate in South Africa's first democratic elections and to take up the position of Archivist for the ANC, thus adding another layer to the exploration of that relationship between the ANC and the USA. I became involved in an ANC project whose goal was to set up the official archive of the party, and in so doing, allowing South Africans to reclaim their past. As pointed out by Ginwala, "an insidious part of colonial rule was that the majority of the people of South Africa were ignored when it came to the acknowledgement and recording of history." In so doing she was actually reiterating the concern of the country's majority that their actions, views and values, if featured at all by the state, were put forward as a negative reaction to legitimate authority.

Therefore part of the new South Africa was to reclaim our past as pointed out by the many speakers the Western Cape Conference on 'The Future of the Past'. For the ANC, part of

the change had to be to correct this situation. By setting up this archive, the ANC was assisting the process of laying the basis on which South Africans as a people could correct the situation.<sup>39</sup> The African National Congress, through its pronouncements in public and in the media communicated its belief that it had a responsibility to all South African peoples to preserve a permanent record of its activities which were really the foundation of a new Southern African culture. And it was given these circumstances that the movement committed itself to the sourcing, retrieval and preservation of its documentary history through the creation of an archive. Other than the ANC, no liberation movement had tried to preserve its records, even in the arduous circumstances in which it had to conduct its struggle for freedom.<sup>40</sup>

As the leading organization in the struggle to end racial discrimination and oppression in general and to dismantle apartheid in particular, the ANC developed a strong network of organizations both inside and outside South Africa. The ANC foreign offices interacted with local organizations and had informal ties with foreign government agencies in the struggle to overthrow the racist government. As a result the archives project included the assembling of records from these 33 foreign offices from where exiled leaders had been working as well as from private collections of individuals who worked against the apartheid regime within the borders of South Africa.

By virtue of an Agreement of Deposit signed by ANC President Mandela in 1992, the University Of Fort Hare became the official repository of the Archives of the African National Congress-thus giving birth to the ANC Archives Project.<sup>41</sup> As the alma mater of Mandela, Fort Hare was considered by the former president to be an appropriate choice.

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<sup>39</sup> See ANC Vision Document which set out the party's Vision for its Archives and was drafted by the ANC Archives Committee in 1995. Input for this document came from all members of the ANC Archives Committee, and was approved by the National Executive Committee of which the Archives Committee was a sub-committee. Folder 2.

<sup>40</sup> Attempts to set up the Biko Archive were only realised in 1998 when the Biko Foundation was established in Johannesburg. Attempts by SWAPO of Namibia to set up an Archive only began in 1999 when the party began the process of trying to locate its materials from abroad. As the ANC Archivist, and through the assistance of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), a German funding agency, I was approached by the party to provide guidance on necessary processes and policies. The COSATU Archives were set up in 2004.

<sup>41</sup> See *Message from ANC President Nelson Mandela* in ANC Archives Launch Brochure entitled *Inside ANC Archives*. This was a commemorative edition published for this event. A copy is in the author's possession. Folder 2.

The institution was a place of learning and research and occupied a significant position in the struggle history of the Southern and East African regions for national emancipation. During the 84 years of its existence, it had seen large numbers of African intellectuals, including those coming from countries like Uganda grace its hallways. This was not lost on Thabo Mbeki, then Deputy-President when he opened the Archive in 1996. He pointed out rather appropriately that:

The record of the struggle, in which the South African section of the African National Congress has been engaged for 84 years, has come to stay at what is incontestably its natural home, the alma mater of many to whose leadership we owe the emancipation of many of the peoples of our continent<sup>42</sup>

But it was not surprising that this decision of the ANC to deposit its records at the University Of Fort Hare should have met with much criticism from many quarters. Given the value and uniqueness of the ANC Archives, the collection became a much sought after commodity by many competing institutions who believed that Fort Hare did not have the necessary infrastructure, resources and experience to house this collection. Many went further to take on the roles of prophets of doom predicting that the collection would be lost, stolen or suffer deterioration at the University. The power of the Archive was certainly recognized by many interested stakeholders, including centres within previously advantaged institutions.

Contrary to these predictions, over the last decade the collection has grown to 1500 boxes of unprocessed materials with 244 linear meters of processed collections at the University Of Fort Hare. As Head of the ANC Archives Unit which was staffed by 12 archivists, the collection always daunted yet excited us. After all, the official ANC records and the private materials made the ANC collection one of the most significant archives dealing with the South African freedom struggle. Its composition of correspondence between party leaders,

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<sup>42</sup> Thabo Mbeki, in his Speech made at the official opening of the ANC Archives at the University of Fort Hare, 17 March 1996. Again as I was present at the event, I received a copy of the distributed speech before the event. Nelson Mandela was expected to launch the Archive, but in view of the personal crisis suffered by him during this time, he communicated his apologies to the ANC and to the University of Fort Hare and designated his deputy to carry out this official task. Also available at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1996/sp960317.html>.

minutes of committee meetings, financial records, records of efforts to develop support outside South Africa and to bring international pressure against apartheid-efforts which I involved myself in the USA- and its graphic and audio-visual collections clearly justified our perception of our work. The collection also includes the records of the ANC camps and activities of its armed wing, Mkhonto we Sizwe (MK), records of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College and the private papers of leaders and activists such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Frene Ginwala and Lionel Forman.<sup>43</sup>

As an activist, intellectual and now record keeper of the ANC's past, the attempts to build the archives had for me two important goals. One, by preserving and reconstructing our country's history, we were able to open the path for a more balanced and inclusive history of our country and secondly we were facilitating that process of the writing of South African history in a manner that recognized the role of the oppressed majority in the history of their country. More importantly though, these archives could help to provide the voice of the country's oppressed and a necessary perspective on events and developments, without which there could be no reconciliation, no reconstruction and no national unity. My later role as a researcher meant that I was to be included in this process of trying to reconstruct our country's past in a more balanced manner and of helping to give recognition to the unrecognized or to the previously voiceless sections of our population. But for Mbeki, the archive was required to say to all "who have ears to hear that they should not hear a still past, but must respond to the living reality that the archive is."<sup>44</sup>

I would confidently promote the view that the movement's struggle to remove the oppressive South African government is an important historical record of its contribution to the birth of a free South Africa. Of significance also was the progression of the struggle to an international level. Evidence for the progression of the struggle to the USA will be

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<sup>43</sup> The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFSCO) was opened by the ANC in Tanzania in 1976 to accommodate the young activists who fled the country during and after the 1976 uprising in Soweto. This college was an important mechanism of the exile period which devoted itself to developing an alternative educational structure to that of the Bantu Education system implemented by the apartheid state. The land for this college was donated by the Tanzanian government in Mazimbu. See "Education for Liberation: The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College; 10 Years 1979-1989" and "Education for Liberation: Overcoming Apartheid at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College", brochure produced by the ANC Department of Information in the United Kingdom. (5 January 1989). Folder 2.

<sup>44</sup> Mbeki at the opening of Archives.

provided by my work on this area. This was perceived from the ANC's strategy of advancing the ideal of non-racialism internationally and also from the role it played in the development of international human rights law and international action against racism.

While my description of the processes involved in setting up the archive of the ANC may appear to be a united and exciting endeavour, the hidden dynamics told a different story to which I was privy through my work and through the directives received. As a result of the interventions of Dr. Frene Ginwala, then Head of the ANC's Research Unit and later the Speaker in the first democratic parliament of South Africa, then ANC President Nelson Mandela, and the National Executive Committee of the ANC, it was decided that the setting up of the Archive of the party was a necessity. This was formalized, as explained earlier on, in 1992. These discussions regarding the setting up of an archive had taken place while the ANC was still in exile strengthening my view that other than the ANC, no liberation movement in the world had tried to preserve its records during its struggle years or while in exile. For those intellectuals in the ANC, like Ginwala, this initiative was strategic since promoting the history of the liberation struggle was "a vital component in building the necessary understanding for healing the nation."<sup>45</sup> So the vision was in place.

What I found more significant was the ANC's emphasis on accountability and transparency, principles it tried to carry through, sometimes unsuccessfully, into its governing of South Africa after 1994. During the many public speeches made about the importance of the ANC Archives, Ginwala, took great pains to emphasise the importance to the ANC of accounting to its people inside the country for its 84 years of exile and struggle activity. The Archives of the ANC were expected to provide the proof of accountability. That such a body of evidence existed and led to the creation of an archive served to substantiate my argument in this study that Africans were activists and hence agents of change. This makes me averse to any historical interpretation labeling South Africa's majority, especially those engaged in any form of resistance activity, as victims. As the creator of the Archive for the party, as an activist myself and as a member of the organization, I was well positioned to reach this conclusion.

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<sup>45</sup> Draft "Vision Document". In possession of author in capacity as member of drafting committee. Folder 2.

All policy documents and recommendations of the Archives committee were sent to the NEC for approval. That the ANC's highest decision making body was involved in this process served to show the importance that the movement attached to such an initiative. Also the decision to locate this project initially in the Research department and later with the Presidency and finally with the Secretary-general's office was evidence that the ANC began to realize the power this archive may be able to wield. But from my experience and engagement with many of ANC members the greatest challenge that I as well as Ginwala and Mandela confronted was that which necessitated an explanation to the majority within the National Working Committee and the National Executive Committee of what constituted an archive and why archival documents may be considered a valuable commodity for the future of the movement. In view of the ignorance that prevailed amongst those non-intellectual segments of the party, power struggles on who controlled the ANC Archive or whether the Archive should be as transparent and accessible as many academics would prefer, did not exist until 1999.

Hence by the time the ANC Oral History Project was conceived, the situation had changed within the ANC, with Archival policy documents requiring greater scrutiny within the NEC. That pressure was mounting on Ginwala was clear as decision making took longer and judgement calls by the Chair of the committee were far fewer. Far greater control was exercised on the ANC Archives. At this point I recalled the earlier days of the archives when University Of Witwatersrand academic Gail Gerhart drew my attention to a document she found during the course of her research in the collection deposited at the University Of Fort Hare in 1996. Her view as an academic was that given the 'contentious' nature of its content, the document should have been classified for restricted access. But upon discussion with stakeholders at the ANC, I was advised that in the interests of transparency and accountability the 'contentious' document should remain open for free access.<sup>46</sup> As the access policy was drafted with input from international experts such as those from the

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<sup>46</sup> This document comprised part of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College Collection (SOMAFCO). SOMAFCO was opened by the ANC in Tanzania in 1979 to cater for the exiles fleeing South Africa in the aftermath of the Soweto Uprising. The document was a disciplinary report on a high level ANC activist who was previously a student of SOMAFCO and was subject to a disciplinary hearing at the College. During the time of Professor Gerhart's research of the ANC Archives at the University of Fort Hare, that individual was holding high political office in the South African Government.

United Nations as well as those from the Archival community, the NEC justified its decision by advising that such input ensured that the movement operated within the standards set by international bodies.

### ***The ANC Oral History Project***

The political dynamics linked to the Archives Project became more evident when the ANC launched its Oral History project. As Coordinator of the Archives Project, I recognized the value of complementing the archival collection with an oral history of those living activists who played an important part of the struggle. In motivating to the Archives Committee for their approval to initiate such a project, I alluded to the need to tap into the memories of leading personalities who fought both inside and outside of South Africa for freedom of South Africa's majority. Many had either retired, or were about to retire from active politics or passed on. Regrettably the latter group includes those such as Joe Slovo, Joe Modise, and Alfred Nzo. Hence there was an urgency to do this as the central role that they played in the struggle was not documented in the materials that were repatriated into the country or collected at the Archival facility at Luthuli House, the headquarters of the ANC in Johannesburg or at the University Of Fort Hare. We found that these records did not constitute the entire history of the freedom struggle because of the repressive nature of the racist government that pursued a systematic policy of eliminating opposition. Many important chapters of the story only existed in the memories of those who participated in this largely underground movement.

While the archival collection constituted the official history of the party, what appeared to be missing were the voices of activists and their families. In effect, there appeared to be silence on this score, which for any historian signifies danger for there is power in silences, compelling us to ask 'whose history is being written.'<sup>47</sup> For me then, this seemed to hark back to the dilemmas of scholars trying to document the apartheid years. Hence the Oral History Project which developed, while assisting in the archiving the history of the African

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<sup>47</sup> See my earlier discussion on the work of the TRC and the previously silence voices.

National Congress, also aimed at addressing these other dilemmas to which I have just alluded.

As National Coordinator of the ANC's Oral History Project as well, I learned that there had been many oral histories devoted to the struggle, such as Wolfie Kodesh's interviews conducted with ANC leadership personalities in 1994 and located at the Mayibuye Centre. But the ANC's project was intended to provide the movement with an opportunity to develop its own history and to share it with others interested in comparative studies. It was also conducted from a different temporal perspective. While the Kodesh interviews were undertaken in the heat of controversy from the strain of exile, the ANC's project was offered from the perspective of the post apartheid era and thus turned out to be valuable in this respect for comparative purposes. A study the interviews undertaken for the ANC Project clearly support my view.<sup>48</sup>

The process of selecting interviewees for the project again involved the NEC which furnished its approval or rejection of the list submitted by the Archives Committee. This committee also played an important role in furnishing names of individuals that the movement considered necessary for an interview. Perhaps the most challenging point of this project was convincing those identified as prospective interviewees to agree to be interviewed. Even a letter of authorization letter from the Secretary-General, Mr. Kgalema Motlanthe seldom facilitated the process. The reason for this could be attributed to the culture of suspicion inherited from the apartheid era.

### ***Documenting the ANC/USA Relationship***

Looking at the ANC during this crucial time that I began to record the history of the movement, documentary sources began to emerge which had some bearing on my topic.

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<sup>48</sup> These interviews with 200 ANC personalities can be accessed at the ANC's repository at the University of Fort Hare. The collection was only transferred from the ANC Headquarters at Luthuli House to the University of Fort Hare in 2006/7. Hence they remain unprocessed. But in view of their value and rich data, they are made available to researchers.

These sources, such as personal collections of Enuga Reddy, the ANC Archives, the records of interviews and conversation, confidential documents, media reports and memoirs provided a lucid view of the interactions between the movement and the solidarity groups, of the strategies employed by both to resist efforts on the part of the US government to bolster the apartheid state, as well as to build support for the South African struggle in the USA. At the same time, I found evidence illustrating the difficulties which the ANC faced in undertaking its work in this country and of the many failures it encountered.<sup>49</sup>

From the oral history interviews conducted by the ANC for its project, interviewees were unanimous that it was their efforts that helped advance the work of the solidarity groups in the USA. However from my interviews conducted with American activists, what emerged was an interesting perspective of their roles in anti-apartheid activity in the USA. Evidence emerging from these different sources excited the archival and scholarly side in me as it seemed as though these different sources began to speak to one another in a rather complex manner.

While living in the USA I did not see this. The ANC appeared more powerful than it really was. But from the sources and from the interviews, it was clear that the progressive element in the USA had it in their interests to perpetuate such a perception. Moreover, it had become even clearer why the ANC joined the corporate world after being unbanned, while at the same time, abandoning the anti-apartheid organizations. To many within these organizations, including myself, this act was indicative of pure selfishness. But in view of the data now available, evidence has come to light vindicating the ANC for what was then considered poor strategy on the movement's part. All of this has helped to explain the complexities of the ANC as a powerful organization in the USA and illustrates what happens to political parties operating in the fashion that the ANC did. Moreover it provided clarity necessary for me to understand what happened twelve years ago.

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<sup>49</sup> This was clear in the correspondence between the ANC in Lusaka and its offices in New York and Washington as well as in reports of the Anti-Apartheid groups. This collection was not consulted in its entirety as the processing had not been completed.

In 2004 I became involved in another related activity aimed at documenting the international dimensions of the freedom struggle. In that year South Africa celebrated her decade of freedom. As part of the national celebrations I acted as Chair for a conference devoted to documenting the role of international anti-apartheid movements in South Africa's freedom struggle. In so doing, we attempted to remind South Africans that the victory of 1994 belonged not just to them but to the thousands of international activists and the organizations they led in solidarity with us.

The conference will be explored in some detail in the final chapter of my study where I will also explore the tensions that were clearly evident between the activists in the USA and those in the ANC. The reason for my decision to allude to this conference in the introduction is done so in order to point out that this event turned out to be a further area of contention between various stakeholders and players including the ANC which applied intense pressure through its many office bearers to persuade me to abandon the decision to host this conference. I have since learned that such actions were driven by unfounded fear on the part of the movement to prevent criticism of the ANC's decade of governance of the country. Hence participation by the ANC was limited to only three senior ANC Ministers—Kader Asmal, then Minister of Education, Ebrahim Ebrahim, then representative of the Office of the Deputy-President and Aziz Pahad, then Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs. The early decision of the ANC to open their archives to ensure transparency and accountability seemed to have slowly disappeared by the end of the first decade.

Although I have been part of the process of creating evidence for posterity, which would otherwise not have been possible without the creation of the ANC Archives, it is undeniable that what has come to light now in terms of the relationship between the ANC and the USA differs considerably from what a scholar may have concluded about this relationship a decade ago. In terms of my personal involvement and experiences, I am convinced that where we are in time affects our perspective on evidence.

Many South African and American activists will surely differ with my interpretations of evidence, as will the African National Congress. But as explained, I have been part of a

process of creating evidence for posterity. This means that I have been placed in the enviable position of enjoying many advantages and privileges, not available to most scholars. But I have also been placed in the rather difficult position of trying to blend claims of objectivity with use of available evidence—thus experiencing, first hand, the confusing agendas of an historian.

### ***The ANC as Agents of Change***

Between 1999 and 2008, President Thabo Mbeki often alluded to the importance of nation building as a prerequisite for a strong South African democracy. But such an agenda requires the implementation of mechanisms designed to build national pride. One such mechanism would surely be history as it assists the process of restoring a nation's pride. But looking at the historiography of the last 40 years, it would be unwise to depend on such history to build national pride or pride in a nation's past.<sup>50</sup> This view has influenced the arguments I have presented in my thesis.

While bodies such as the History Workshop have attempted to popularise history, to counter distortions of history and to create a new class of African intelligentsia, the history that was eventually conveyed to the majority, or the research that they produced in the 1970s and 1980s, was not meaningful enough to capture the attention of, or empower the majority.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Much of the history written in South Africa over the last 40 year served to perpetuate the myths and horrors of apartheid. This meant that blacks were always portrayed as “savage” or “passive”. A critique of this view was powerfully summarised by Belinda Bozzoli. See Belinda Bozzoli. “Intellectuals, Audiences and histories: South African Experiences, 1978-1988.” *Radical History Review* 46/7 1990. 238. Liberal historians such as Leonard Thompson, writing in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s failed to decolonise their frames of reference and did little to highlight the extent of colonial and apartheid repression, focusing instead on Afrikaners who were ‘pitied’ or their ‘backwardness and racism’ condoned. Radical historians such as Stanley Trapido, Shula Marks, Harold Wolpe and Martin Legassik reacted against this. Hence in their efforts to decolonize the country's history, attempted revisionist interpretations in the late 1970s and late 1980s. But this was not enough to assist in advancing the work of the liberation organizations in the politically turbulent years.

<sup>51</sup> The “History Workshop” was formed in 1978 at the University of Witwatersrand in an attempt to connect new historiographical interpretations with the needs of the new voices of South Africa such as those of the trade unions, teachers, students and others. The fact that they followed a middle course did not augur well for them.

In a free South Africa today there is a flood of publications devoted to presenting a balanced view of the country's history. But it is my observation that this history continues to be conveyed by historians who persist in presenting the African as a victim rather than an agent of change. This also reminds me of a presentation made by Mbeki, as a representative of the African National Congress at a conference in Ottawa, Canada in 1978 where he presented the movement's views of how it expected its years of struggle to be judged by history. He asserted that in a free South Africa, "we would have placed ourselves in the position of makers of history and policy and no longer be mere objects of that history."<sup>52</sup> But thirty years later historians have still failed to manage such expectations well even though there exists today a large body of evidence to point to these very Africans as being dynamic agents of change. To redress this area of weakness of South African historiography I would call for the development of a cadre of African historians who either having lived through the struggle era or having had loved ones involved in the struggle, present history on an academic level where the focus could be on the issue of agency. While the need for this type of historian is being rapidly acknowledged, greater effort is required to introduce measures to fast track this process.

In the 1950s Professor Z. K. Matthews, who was the first graduate of the Fort Hare Native College communicated his frustration at being exposed to the colonial version of South African History. But what for him appeared to be even worse was the marginalisation of the role of Africans in this history.

Our history, as we had absorbed it from the tales and talk of our elders, bore no resemblance to South African history as it had been written by European scholar... The European insisted that we accept his version of the past and what is more, if we wanted to get ahead educationally, even to pass examinations in the subject as he presented it. It was one thing to accept willingly and even eagerly the white man's world of literature and science. It was quite another to accept his picture of how we came to occupy the places in life now assigned to us.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Thabo Mbeki. "Domestic and Foreign Policies of a new South Africa," in Review of African Political Economy. Vol. 5. Issue 11, January 1978. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Memoir by Monica Wilson. Freedom for my People: The Autobiography of ZK Mathews: Southern Africa 1901-1968 (David Philip. Cape Town, 1983). 58

Scholars may well take issue with this arguing that this was said in a different time in our country's history. Yet I am again reminded of the year 1977 when I was enrolled as a student in the history department of the apartheid created Indian university, the University of Durban-Westville. While there I questioned the type of South African history that was taught to students and sought to present my views of the role of Africans in my term assignments. I was warned to adhere to the faculty-held views. Any deviation, I was warned, would result in my failing the course. Even more strange was the view that 'Indians were not allowed to think.'<sup>54</sup>

But I must caution against the view that there were no outstanding black writers in the country. Writers such as A. C. Jordan, Alfred Z. Ngani, Sibusiso Nyembezi, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, Jordan Ngubane, Albert Luthuli, S. M. Molema, Dr. Alfred Bitini Xuma, Govan Mbeki, Francis Meli and Lewis Nkosi, produced works that clearly merit mention as being worthy of the genre of literature needed to address the needs of a transformed society, but regrettably they appear to have been marginalised or lost in the post apartheid efforts to narrate the new history of the country.<sup>55</sup>

There were countless Africans who gave their lives for the freedom we enjoy today. As members of liberation organisations such as the African National Congress, they became

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<sup>54</sup> The University of Durban-Westville was established in 1972 in Durban, South Africa, as a successor to the University College for Indians at Salisbury Island (formerly an army barracks) which was established in 1960. This institution grew out of the 1959 University Act which legislated for the implementation of separate development at tertiary level. Hence this was one of the universities born. Others included the Universities of the Western Cape, Turfloop, and Zululand.

<sup>55</sup> Many of these writers either held office in the ANC or played a role in the early development of the organisation. Plaatje wrote extensively as a journalist while Molema who qualified as a medical doctor in Glasgow was more of the historian. The former was remembered for his study of the devastating effects of the 1913 Native land Act in *Native Life in South Africa* and for his historic epic *Mhudi* while the latter for his posthumously published work, *Montshiwa*. Then there was Albert Luthuli who became President of the ANC in 1952 whose autobiography *Let my People Go*, succeeded in documenting the various ANC campaigns and tactics more than actually shedding much light on Luthuli's role as President of the movement. Jordan Ngubane, one of the founders of the ANC Youth League, wrote *An African Explains Apartheid* during exile in 1961 in which he attacked the influence of the communists on African organizations. Before his imprisonment as an MK leader, Govan Mbeki completed his historical study of Transkeian resistance in *The Peasant's Revolt*. While many mistakenly consider Francis Meli's *South Africa belongs to us: A History of the ANC*, to be an officially commissioned history of the movement, this was not the case. Meli, although previously an editor of *Sechaba* and a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee, wrote this in his private capacity. Then there were the early African literature writers (1950s-1960s) who produced a fair amount of excellent protest literature. These include A.C. Jordan known for his stirring work, *The Wrath of the Ancestors*; Sibusiso Nyembezi who produced *NyeMntanami! Mntanami!* and the Drum generation of writers like Lewis Nkosi, who was the author of many essay collections including *Home and Exile*.

critical agents responsible for changing the history of South Africa. This history of the power of the African and their role in the freedom struggle needs to be communicated to the majority so they may view their past with pride and in so doing play a role in strengthening our new democracy. The lack of scholarly attention on the ANC's foreign policy led to an inadequate account of its critical role in helping establish a climate that made the international isolation of SA possible, thus paving the way for the country's freedom. I would argue that through the work of individuals and their creation of a network of international exchanges and changing tactics, we can concur that the ANC, while not passive or submissive, was proactive enough to respond to changing circumstances to challenge the apartheid state.

When I think about the African National Congress as an agency of change, I am always reminded about the words of then ANC President Albert Luthuli who, in his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize on 11 December 1961, articulated the issue of the resilience and determination of the ANC and its people when he referred to the “unconquerable spirit” which characterised South Africa’s oppressed and of “their striving with incredible determination and fortitude for the right to live as free men.”<sup>56</sup> Such ‘fortitude’ clearly drove the ‘struggle’ and was evident even in their attempts to develop international policies while simultaneously fighting the state on the domestic front.

To answer the questions I initially ask and to support my arguments I have organized my research into four areas which are covered by five different chapters. But as I re-read them I realize that the preoccupation remains twofold: firstly, the tension created by my wearing two hats, that of the archivist versus the interpreter of the material I have created and secondly, that the ANC was not a passive or unchanging organization. Far from being a victim, the ANC was an agent of change.

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<sup>56</sup> Audio-Recording of the Speech of Albert Luthuli made during his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in Sweden in December 1961. Luthuli Biographical Collection, B/Luthuli. Documentation Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Westville Campus.

### ***Source Description***

Like all dissertations, the data for this study is drawn from numerous sources. But what gives this study a somewhat unique dimension is the complexity created by issues of time and space, the historical milieu, my personal involvement and experiences, changing perceptions and finally the sometimes unconventional manner of acquiring sources. These have further contributed to a rather philosophical manner of data construction in my attempts to examine a transatlantic relationship which remained at the mercy of global developments.

Conducting research on Africa's oldest liberation organization began in a different and difficult time when the history of the ANC was hardly documented. Locating sources on the history of the movement was a Herculean endeavour as the official ANC Archive only opened in 1996, with only the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College Collection (SOMAFCO) processed for research. At the time we estimated that the repatriated collections from abroad, numbering almost seven million documents, would have been processed and catalogued in a period of ten years, by which time, I expected to complete my study. Also, as I learned from my years abroad, through my interaction with American and South African activists living in USA and from my work at Yale University, sources on the work of the movement and on events in South Africa during the struggle-era were strewn across the globe or in personal hands.<sup>57</sup> This, together with the issues which I referred to earlier on, complicated the research and data construction process. Given this, I have been particularly cautious to critically assess sources and to test for historical errors. This process was vital to ensure that a constant vigilance was brought to bear in my interpretation of the sources.

The majority of the sources used for this study are archival based and are drawn from archives in South Africa and the United States of America and include organizational records such as those belonging to the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) and the African National Congress; Presidential collections such that of John F. Kennedy Papers; Official

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<sup>57</sup> How they landed in private hands is a story that needs to be told. Suffice to say in this study, many documents and collections were handed to individuals in the USA and other countries for safekeeping by South African activists and freedom fighters who saw this as the only means of saving their material from falling into the hands of South African's security apparatus.

State Records such as those of the US State department and the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and Safety and Security; Personal Papers which include those of Mr. Enuga Reddy in the USA and Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela in South Africa; old interviews and conversations that I had undertaken as well as interviews compiled by others such as the ANC; memoirs such as those of chief Albert Luthuli, Z.K. Mathews, Sol Plaatjie, Nelson Mandela and the most recent publications of Ahmed Kathrada, Phyllis Naidoo and Mac Maharaj; newspapers from the period under review as well as more current newspapers that reflect on the events related to my period of study; unpublished dissertations; official organizational and other websites; and finally confidential material not available in archives and in the public domain.

A number of national and international scholarly works, including journal articles- focusing on global developments, USA and international policy, African developments and African resistance and South African politics- whose research, arguments and conclusions have given me the comparative and abstract space to position my own dilemmas and analyses, have been meaningful components of my data compilation for this study.

While the conference held in Durban in 2004 was intended to document the role of the international solidarity movement in South Africa's freedom struggle as well as the ANC's attempts to develop global relationships, there has been growing interest in this area by scholars in the last two decades. However the interest has not been as vigorous as would have been expected, given the significance of these groups in their contribution to the attempts of South Africa's majority to secure freedom. As this study acknowledges the value of other global solidarity attempts such as those in Africa, Asia, Western and Eastern Europe, Canada, the Far East, New Zealand, Australia and South America, it is not the scope of this study to interrogate the international terrain.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Such interest is reflected in the following sample literature. Daniel R. Kempton. Soviet Strategy Toward Southern Africa: The National Liberation Connection (New York. Praeger, 1989), Donald Culverson. Contesting Apartheid: US Activism 1960-1987 (Colorado. Westview Press, 1999), Enuga Reddy. India and South Africa: A Collection of Papers (Durban. University of Durban-Westvill, 1991), George W. Shepherd. Anti-Apartheid: Transnational Conflict and Western Policy in the Liberation of South Africa (Westport. Greenwood Press, 1977), Hakan Thorn. "Solidarity against Borders : The Transnational Anti-Apartheid Movement." In Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary Non-Profit Organisations Vol. 17. No. 4, December 2006 (Online Publication), Linda Freeman. The Ambiguous Champion: Canada and South Africa in

### **Chapter Outline**

In my first chapter I explore certain critical stages in the history of the African National Congress, Africa's oldest liberation organization between 1945 and 1976. By doing this, I will be allowed the space to argue that the ANC responded to crises in a proactive manner instead of just throwing in the towel. This was done by exploring alternative strategies and internal discourses that included interrogating the development of an international policy- which was tailor made to suit different countries and different relationships. Such discourses grew out of the experiences gained through early contacts developed between individuals in the United States of America and the ANC. All these early contacts did undoubtedly lay the foundation for later formal links.

What I found encouraging in this early research was that the ANC, although formed in 1912, was by 1970 able to formulate a thoroughly researched and well constructed draft foreign policy document aimed at implementing a new solution to its struggle-that of isolating the apartheid state internationally. Moving the struggle to the international battleground was considered vital for the movement's survival by the late 1960s and early 1970s. This decision will be interrogated with much intensity. Though well formulated and researched, I will demonstrate that the implementation of the principles and actions outlined in the document proved far too challenging. This was particularly the case in the USA-the area of this study's focus. But then I learned through the interviews undertaken with comrades in the ANC and activists in the USA that the notion of building a relationship with the most powerful global player was not going to be an easy one. Hence neither I nor other scholars can accuse the movement of naivete. In constructing this chapter I acknowledged that these early attempts provided the ANC with a fresh canvas upon which to craft their new policies including an international one. This reminds me of a further instance when the ANC was provided with a similar opportunity. This happened in 1993 when it was presented with another blank canvas upon which to craft South Africa's first democratic constitution-from scratch as it is often said.

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the Trudeau and Mulroney Years (University of Toronto Press, 1997), Penny O' Donnell. Australians Against Racism: Testimony from the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Australia (Annandale, NSW. Pluto Press, 1995) Tor Sellstrom. Sweden and National Liberation and South Africa Vols. 1 and 2 (Uppsala. Nordiska Afrika Institute, 1999).

Chapter two is critical to my study and is united by the question that probes how different American administrations from Kennedy to Kissinger under Nixon reacted to African issues and African liberations organizations, particularly the ANC, within the context of apartheid. This chapter grounds my arguments by demonstrating that these administrations were as Christopher Coker pointed out “trapped by the ambiguities of their own position”-all of which shaped the ANC’s actions and changing strategies. But a study of the administrations of this period cannot be undertaken without viewing their actions within the cold war lens. In this regard, I demonstrated how global events complicated the ANC’s efforts at developing this relationship. Hence I took the liberty of scrutinizing this area as well. This discussion is critical in providing an understanding of the difficulties the ANC encountered in trying to secure the serious interest of the American state. In fact I am going to be dramatic and suggest that this was a formidable endeavour which only achieved success when George Shultz met Tambo in 1987.

Even the historiography of this area is complex as they fit into three categories: 1) scholars who have looked at the relationship within the cold war lens: 2) those who looked at international policy in the region as apologists for the apartheid state and 3) the third group which moved away from the traditional approach to take into account the different constituencies influencing the relationship. Also the ANC only opened its official Mission in the USA in the 1980s-thus demonstrating the difficulties of securing support for its actions against South Africa. I want to be perfectly clear at the outset that while this chapter does not attempt a comprehensive study of American Policy per se, this overview is necessary in demonstrating the effectiveness of civil society in changing American Policy towards the liberations movements such as the ANC. In effect it strategically paves the way for the next two chapters, while helping the reader to understand why the ANC persevered and succeeded in its attempts to develop a relationship with the American state, in spite of the support provided by the American administrations to the apartheid state. Again I suggest here that this was a strategic decision to keep the lines of communication open, a decision that ultimately yielded the necessary result for all disenfranchised South Africans.

In Chapter Three, I move strategically away from the USA to what I would consider 'home ground' for the ANC--the continent of Africa. My intention in looking at regional developments will be to demonstrate that given the scenes being played out on the African continent it become all the more imperative for the ANC to pursue links with a hostile yet powerful United States of America. Challenges presented on the African continent exacerbated the organisation's attempts to advance the liberation struggle and the isolation of the apartheid state. Simply put, the ANC was compelled to react to what it considered, but did not openly admit, was African betrayal. In this regard I would even go further to acknowledge that the ANC's reactions and guarded responses set the trend for a post apartheid apologist African policy which would see silent diplomacy and lack of criticism as being the order of the day.

My prognosis here will be that the ANC had no influence on African diplomacy-resulting in a long and lengthy battle with the African states until 1990. While a very firm prognosis, I will strengthen this by focusing on South Africa's new outward looking policy for the region and the African responses to this. These responses were derived through the many regional meetings that took place between 1969 and 1975. This also provides a cogent justification for looking at what American involvement was in this region in this time, for such involvement allows me to raise more explicit questions of where the USA placed the ANC and its struggle within its Africa policy initiatives. It also leads to an understanding of the direction in which the relationship between the African liberation organization and this global player were proceeding.

In Chapter Four, I continue with the interrogation of US policy towards the ANC and its attempts to satisfy the will of South Africa's oppressed majority. But the focus here would be on the Carter and Reagan years. Particular emphasis is paid to the Carter administration because this was the only administration that began by placing South Africa and the liberation struggle high on its agenda. But my main argument would be that this was an administration laced with ironies. By exploring certain events and actions of particular individuals, I will demonstrate the hypocrisy of the so called 'liberal era.'" Given the supposedly 'liberal nature' of the Carter era and its eventual swing to the right, I believe it

critical to add the ANC voices to the issue of liberalism within the context of the Carter era. But here I faced many challenges in this endeavour as the ANC remained silent on this administration, even though it may have suffered much disillusionment. A related challenge to be addressed in this Chapter again relates to sources and evidence. My research has yielded the following result which carries a great degree of irony with it-that very little ANC primary evidence exists for the period during and just after the Carter era.

In regards to the Reagan years, I will present the following argument: that although it was the most depressing time for the ANC domestically and internationally, it was also an era of opportunities. It was an era that not only witnessed the ANC getting its foot in the door in regards to securing recognition from the USA State, but also one in which many other opportunities manifested themselves in forms such as the educational traffic across the Atlantic. How the ANC's relationship with the Soviet Union suffered during this time, as a result of new domestic developments within the latter, forms an indispensable element of this period of study. The fact that these opportunities within the USA began presenting themselves at a time that cracks began to develop in the ANC/Soviet relationship as a result of Perestroika, will be thoroughly explored.

While the earlier Chapters have alluded to the early official and unofficial contacts that existed between the ANC and North American pressure groups and anti-apartheid organizations since the early 1940s, Chapter Five demonstrates how the influence of the organizations and individuals who were involved grew steadily, culminating in a level of involvement in the 1980s that was unprecedented. I will present evidence to prove that such pressure became a force to be reckoned with in Washington and hence began to shape state department policy in a manner that was destined to prove advantageous to South Africa's liberation struggle. The intention would be to prove beyond any shadow of doubt that the ANC could not have won the heart and soul of the American nation without the work of the solidarity groups. But at the outset, while dwelling in this Chapter on the role of the Solidarity groups in the USA, I would caution against any perception that this was the most influential solidarity group operating globally. This was not so. Global anti-apartheid activity stretched across many countries including the United Kingdom, the Nordic

Countries, African Countries, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Mexico, Spain and Japan to name a few. But these will not be examined in my study.

While the previous chapter focused on the various administrations in the USA, minimal attention was paid to the Reagan administration. This was deliberate so that this chapter could focus on those years, thus allowing me to argue that the relationship between the Reagan administration and the apartheid state was strengthened through military intelligence links between the two—all of which was exposed to the public and the world through the work of the anti-apartheid groups like Transafrica. Emphasis will be placed on the Durban Conference of 2004 to illustrate the tensions that existed between the different groups and the ANC, and which was evident during the discussions in 2004 – a decade of freedom indeed.

## *Chapter One*

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### **DOMESTIC POLITICS, A BLANK CANVAS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL POLICY: 1945-1976**

#### **Abstract**

*This opening chapter, which marks the starting point for my thesis, sets the scene for the main arguments of this study. The strategy I have embarked on is to focus on key developments in the ANC during the period from 1945-1976. These guided the movement on the chosen path towards the development of an international policy, with specific reference to the United States of America, after 1969. Through the body of evidence available to me, I will demonstrate that by moving the battle to the international arena, the movement was not only responding in a positive manner to ensure its survival, but it also demonstrated its unstinting determination to secure political power for the majority. In interrogating the implications and repercussions of this move, I will be using evidence drawn from extensive secondary as well as primary sources—all of which support my arguments and conclusions, and in so doing demonstrate the challenges experienced in regards to data for the pre-1960 period. The Soweto uprising of 1976 will also merit scrutiny, but only to illustrate how the domestic scene disappeared then reappeared in ANC policy planning. The Chapter focuses on the domestic scene in South Africa, the ANC's response to the oppressive nature of this scene, the early forging of personal contacts between individuals in the ANC and the USA—all which provided the foundation for a formal relationship with the latter, which was to come only 18 years later. In relation to this I also locate my arguments within the context of the African diaspora, with specific focus on the role of Black Internationalism in the development of the ANC/USA relationship and in the resultant mobilisation against apartheid. While the African continent begins to take on a new and important role in the international scene in the 1960s, which would impact on African countries' responses to apartheid and on the ANC's attempts to develop a relationship with the USA, these processes are not scrutinised in this opening chapter. By 1968 positions were being taken by non-aligned states in Africa and the west. Though the Chapter focuses on the USA, there were developments in other parts of the world. Soweto recalibrated ANC relationships with these parts of the world and with East Africa in particular. Ripple effects were also felt in other parts of the world. This chapter demonstrates how the ANC was willing to use political adversaries. Although the movement was*

*not ideologically in tune with all forces, no entity was setting up to destroy it. This meant that the ANC had no enemies apart from the apartheid state.*

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The African National Congress was Africa's oldest liberation movement. It was also an African movement and as such, this brought greater challenges in trying to secure recognition of the world's most influential player-the USA.<sup>1</sup> Albert Luthuli recognised these challenges of being an 'African player' and referred to them during his acceptance address of the Nobel Peace Prize – during which he pointed to the 'woes and tribulations' of the African continent. But for him, the 1960s represented a time of optimism for he saw that time as "Africa's Age-the dawn of her fulfilment." He believed that "Africa was a vital subject matter in the world today, a focal point of world interest and concern." Hence he concluded by asking a very pertinent question, "could it not be that history has delayed her rebirth for a purpose."<sup>2</sup> I will argue that such optimism was short sighted for the African continent merited little international interest until well into the 1970s. This argument also helps locate the ANC/USA relationship within this international ambit.

### **Sources**

At the outset I would like to draw attention to the difficulties of obtaining data for the pre-1960 years. Given the issues of time and distance, I have been compelled to rely largely on secondary evidence for this period. These include studies undertaken by scholars such as Steven Gish, Peter Walshe, Brian Willan, Mary Benson, Thomas Karis, Gwendolen Carter and Edward Feit.<sup>3</sup> They also include autobiographies as well as works

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<sup>1</sup> When I use the term 'African' to describe the ANC, I am actually referring to it as being a movement with roots on the African continent.

<sup>2</sup> Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech. Luthuli collection, B/Luthuli. Documentation Centre. UKZN.

<sup>3</sup> Steven D. Gish. Alfred B. Xuma: African American, South African (Washington. New York University Press.2000); Peter Walshe. The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa (Berkeley. University of California Press, 1971); Brian Willan. Sol Plaatje: A Biography (Johannesburg. Ravan Press, 1984); Mary Benson. The African Patriots (New York. The Pilgrim Press, 1989); Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter(eds). From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa

of those involved in the struggle inside South Africa and internationally. Included in this category of secondary studies are the works of Sol Plaatje, Adelaide Tambo, Ruth First, Fathima Meer, Albert Luthuli, Bernard Magubane and George Houser.<sup>4</sup> But extremely useful primary data for the early years was obtained from dissertations of historians and political scientists which include those by John Douglas Nelson, Penny von Eschen, and Elena Dorabji and from the papers made available by Mr. E.S. Reddy.<sup>5</sup> For the later years I have relied on evidence obtained from archival materials such as the ANC's own records which included the Mission Office records, ANC National Executive Committee Documents and media reports from the USA. Also useful were the Foreign Office Files of the South African government and the House of Assembly Debates. Critical policy and discussion documents were furnished by anonymous donors and remain in the possession of the author.

In engaging with the above sources, it becomes necessary to remind the reader of the premises that underpin my arguments in this entire study, namely, my dilemmas of interpreting data that I have created or generated and the issue of the African National Congress as an agent of change in South Africa. I will concentrate on critical stages in the history of the African National Congress with the intention of demonstrating how the movement responded to crises and challenges presented by the state and by internal strife-with specific focus on its attempts to develop an international policy which paved the way for a relationship with the United States of America.

Further complexities have also been created by recent academic studies which are divided over the ANC's attempts to mobilise support internationally as a strategy of moving the

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1882-1964 Volume 1 Protest and Hope 1882-1934 (Stanford. Hoover Institution Press, 1972); Edward Feit. The Dynamics of the African National Congress (London. Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> Sol Plaatje. Native Life in South Africa (London. P. S. King, 1916), Adelaide Tambo. Preparing for Power: Oliver Tambo Speaks (London. Heinemann, 1987), Albert Luthuli. Let My People Go (London. Collins, 1961), George Houser. No One Can Stop the Rain (New York. The Pilgrim Press, 1989). Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane. The Ties That Bind: African American Consciousness of Africa (New Jersey. African World Press, 1987), Ruth First(ed.). Nelson Mandela: No Easy Walk to Freedom (New York. Basic Books, 1965). Fathima Meer. Higher than Hope: The Authorised Biography of Nelson Mandela (New York. Harper and Row, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> John Douglas Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict within South Africa: A Study of the Place of International Activities in the Development of the African National Congress", Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (George Washington University, 1975), Penny Marie Von Eschen. "African Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957: the Rise and fall of the Politics of the African Diaspora", Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Columbia University, 1994), Elena Venturini Dorabji. "South African National Congress: Change from Non-Violence to Sabotage between 1952 and 1964", Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (University of California, 23 May 1979).

struggle to a different level. One group views the movement's attempts at negotiating international partnerships as being critical to the success of the liberation struggle, while the other takes issue with the ANC for neglecting the domestic networks. The former includes Scott Thomas whose views find appeal in my arguments throughout this dissertation, Kenneth Mokoena and Thabo Mbeki while the latter include Raymond Suttner, Nhlanla Ndebele and Noor Nieftagodien and finally, Dale McKinley who appear at odds with the goal of this study.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Strategy***

Instead of analysing the ANC, its structures and functions in any depth, this chapter will, by way of introduction, attempt to unravel the nature and effectiveness of the organisation and its strategies from the 1950s. This will allow me the opportunity to provide an assessment of the reasons advanced by the ANC to move its concentration from the domestic to the international arena. I will therefore argue that the development of a relationship with the US State and Civil society did not happen rapidly for there was no international policy in place before 1969.

Given that the ANC was, in the early years, an emerging liberation movement, which was placed at the nexus of a myriad of hostile and conflicting forces, the development of an international policy was not accomplished easily. It was a long and arduous process influenced by the hostile domestic environment and complicated by an ignorant foreign terrain, with the result that a restructuring of the movement at different stages became necessary.<sup>7</sup> This was marked by turning points and milestones in the ANC's development and strategies.

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<sup>6</sup> Scott Thomas. The Diplomacy of Liberation: The Foreign Relations of the African National Congress Since 1960 (London. Taurus Academic Studies, 1996); Kenneth Mokoena. South Africa and the United States. The Declassified History (New York. The New Press, 1993); Thabo Mbeki. "Domestic and Foreign Policies of a New South Africa", in Review of African Political Economy. No. 11 (January-April 1978); Raymond Suttner. The ANC Underground in South Africa (Sunnyside. JacanaMedia, 2008); Nhlanla Ndebele and Noor Nieftagodien. "The Morogoro Conference: A Moment of Self Reflection", in The Road to Democracy. Vol 3. (Pretoria. Zebra Press, 2004), Dale MacKinley. The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography (London. Pluto Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> The domestic environment was characterized by acts of resistance such as the Defiance Campaign and uprisings such as that at Sharpsville, Langa and Soweto, and repressive actions such as arrests, torture and detentions leading to the Treason and Rivonia Trials and the banning of the liberation organisations such as the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress (PAC).

### ***International Opportunities: 1948-1960***

For the period from 1948 to 1960, evidence supports my argument that the ANC was presented with opportunities to network internationally, albeit in a limited and modest capacity. This was so because these were either undertaken by individuals within the movement who were keen to develop contacts and personal ties with individuals in the USA, or by the movement itself which resorted to loose institutional formations. In view of this I would conclude that all of these initiatives did not form part of any tactical manoeuvre. At the same time I would posit the view that they preceded and influenced the process of formulating the future official international policy of the movement. Moreover US State policy in these early years towards anti colonial initiatives and their responses to African and Asian nationalism in the 1940s did much to shape future ANC views in relation to developing a relationship with the USA. Evidence for this can be gleaned from the works of scholars such as Brian Willan, Sol Plaatje, Peter Walshe, John Douglas Nelson, George Houser, Mary Benson, Albert Luthuli, Steven Gish and Penny Von Eschen.<sup>8</sup>

Such opportunities to seek international assistance for the plight of South Africa's oppressed, and to develop international contacts were provided when members of the newly formed South African Native National Congress(SANNC) undertook two visits to Britain in 1914. Following the passing of the 1913 Natives land Act, John Dube, President of the newly formed SANNC led a deputation to Britain to protest the terms of this act, in the event of its being fully implemented.<sup>9</sup> But it proved unsuccessful as the British government failed to intervene arguing that interference in such areas would prove detrimental to British goals of self government within the empire.

The second deputation was undertaken after the conclusion of World War I and with greater enthusiasm which emanated from Congress belief that African loyalty during the

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<sup>8</sup> Willan. Sol Plaatje, Peter Walshe. The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict within South Africa," Plaatje. Native Life in South Africa, Houser. No One Can Stop The Rain, Benson. African Patriots, Albert J. Luthuli. Let My People Go, Gish. Alfred B. Xuma, Von Eschen. "African Americans and Anti-Colonialism."

<sup>9</sup> This act was designed to entrench territorial segregation and to strengthen the white farmers. Prior to 1913, white farmers became extremely alarmed by African acquisition of land. Hence this act was aimed at stopping African acquisition to land. By virtue of its implementation, it meant that 1.5 million whites were allocated 90% of the land while the African population of 5.5 million got less than 10%. In effect then out of a total population of 27 million, Africans possessed 13% of land in South Africa. See Plaatje. Native Life in South Africa.

war was really indicative of the state's willingness to liaise with regular political channels within South Africa.<sup>10</sup> Also speeches made by Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George created the perception that a less hostile environment existed for addressing issues dealing with civil rights.<sup>11</sup> So the objective of this second delegation was clear-to call for the removal of the colour bar.

During a meeting with Prime Minister Lloyd George, Sol Plaatje who was a member of the SANNC delegation, made many emotional appeals. In his autobiography of Plaatje, Brian Willan provided an account of the former's life as a means of drawing attention to his political vision and contribution to a free and common society. Willan was of the view, and justifiably so, that there has not been much recognition of his life and work for "his political career was gradually forgotten... and his manuscripts were lost or destroyed." In regards to his examination of the role of Plaatje in the early attempts to seek international assistance, Willan contended that he (Plaatje) "had touched the right chords with Lloyd George" who, true to his word, wrote two letters to the then South African Prime Minister, General Jan Smuts, communicating his concern at the "deep sense of injustice" which was communicated to him by the SANNC deputation. As these were confidential letters, written in the form of a personal appeal, it brought no reprieve for the country's majority.<sup>12</sup> In effect then the end result of the second visit of the SANNC deputation was no different from the first visit.

But evidence of these visits point to other advantages such as the opportunities to initiate contacts with a number of individuals and organizations. For example, Plaatje remained in England after the others had returned to South Africa in order to complete work on his book and to continue further campaigns in the UK. During that time, he attended the Second and Third Pan-African Congress meetings, establishing contacts with other black organizations from Africa and the USA.<sup>13</sup> Before he returned to South Africa, he also

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<sup>10</sup> Willan. *Sol Plaatje*. 242.

<sup>11</sup> Walshe. *The Rise of African Nationalism*. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Willan. *Sol Plaatje*. 246.

<sup>13</sup> These were part of a series of five meetings held between 1919 and 1945, initially conceptualized to reinforce a sense of identification with the Diaspora. The first meeting held in 1919 in Paris was organized by African American journalist W.E.B. Du Bois. The second meeting which Plaatje attended was considered the most radical of all the meetings because it resulted in the 'London Manifesto' which attacked colonial enslavement of Africans. The third congress, though not well organized, again attacked colonialism and called for self rule. Exposure to these forums meant that Plaatje was given an

undertook a visit to Canada and the US where he met with W.E. B. Du Bois and with the NAACP.<sup>14</sup>

During the periods 1912 to 1924, further evidence of unofficial contacts being established with governments and organizations emerged.<sup>15</sup> But as indicated earlier on, these contacts were undertaken on an individual basis, and as such it would appear that they were not planned or mandated by the ANC. While I would caution against over-emphasising the value of these contacts because they were undertaken on an individual basis, I would simultaneously argue that they assisted in laying the foundation for future relationships. This distinction between official and unofficial contacts was an important one in demonstrating that the ANC had no official policy in this regard. A loose description was in place as many contacts were undertaken in a personal capacity.

Among the group of individuals who acted on their own were John Dube who attended the Pan African Conference in England in 1923, Z. R. Mahabane at the International Missionary Conference in Belgium and Josiah Gumede at the meeting of the League against Imperialism which also met in Belgium in February 1927.<sup>16</sup> Gumede, who had become President-General of the ANC in 1927, addressed the conference twice and “made a deep impression on the assembly” by alerting delegates to the plight of Africans and their attempts at resistance to the apartheid state.<sup>17</sup> After the Brussels conference, Gumede undertook a trip to Germany, where he made presentations to rallies organised by the Communist Party before proceeding to Moscow. This visit marked the first contact with the government of the Soviet Union, which he described as the “new

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opportunity to highlight the plight of South Africans, to network with delegates from other colonies and to learn to appreciate the value of international links and policy.

<sup>14</sup> Sol Plaatje. *Native Life in South Africa*. 225. Exposure to African American individuals and groups helped shaped his political outlook upon his return to South Africa and contributed to the development of his political views. Through the support of those like Du Bois and the NAACP Plaatje was able to continue his campaigns in the US and to get a hearing at bodies such as the Pan African Congress in Europe. In 1946, W.E. B. Du Bois and the NAACP joined the Council on African Affairs in protesting Smut’s annexation of South West Africa—thus continuing to support the African cause in South Africa. Hence these early meetings were important in developing a network that would provide assistance in the future.

<sup>15</sup> See Benson and the ANC official website at <http://www.anc.org.za>. (Historical Documents).

<sup>16</sup> Represented at this conference were 174 anti-colonial fighters from all over the world. According to the ANC website of historical documents, this was the first instance in history, where representatives of the progressive labour movements of the capitalist countries had come together with delegates from the labour and national liberation movements. The latter included those who were still under the control of colonialism and imperialism.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/gumede\\_jt.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/gumede_jt.html).

Jerusalem.”<sup>18</sup> These trips to Belgium and to Russia were undertaken in a personal capacity to explore fresh sources of assistance for the movement, which arose out of frustration at their own miserable situation.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of the noble reasons for his visit, Gumede was one of those who suffered the effects of party denouncement for such actions.

In 1924, he had written to the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society **voicing** his disappointment at the British government for failing to offer any assistance to his people. “We are at a loss,” he stated, “We do not know where we are going and what is going to be the position of the landless people. Without a voice in parliament we are victims of those who have the voice.” It became apparent then that he regarded help from the international sector as vital for the work of the ANC. From his initial contact with Communist leaders at the Belgium meeting and during his visit to the Soviet Union, Gumede indicated that the Communist party was the most logical source to turn to. According to him “of all the political parties, the Communist Party is the only one that honestly and sincerely fights for the oppressed people.”<sup>20</sup> His proposals to explore the feasibility of an alliance with the Communist party were not well received by members of the ANC National Executive.<sup>21</sup>

Gumede’s association with the Communists and the persistent refusal of his colleagues to accept an alliance with the Soviet Union resulted in his expulsion from official duties after only eighteen months of service. This expulsion provided evidence of ANC intervention in cases of non-mandated contacts. Gumede’s expulsion was driven not only through his recommendation for exploring the feasibility of an alliance with the Communist Party, but also by the fact that this was a visit undertaken in a personal capacity-and as such was not mandated by the movement. This action was one example of the ANC’s short sightedness and recalcitrance in respect of its attention to the international realm. While this conclusion may be indicative of a mixed prognosis on my part, given my overarching arguments for the ANC as an agency of change, I need to

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<sup>18</sup> After his return to South Africa, he made public addresses during which he referred to the Soviet Union as the “new Jerusalem”.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Benson. *The African Patriots*. 62.

<sup>20</sup> This he stated in his Presidential Report to the ANC’s Annual Conference in June 1927. [http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/gumede\\_it.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/gumede_it.html).

<sup>21</sup> Walshe. *African Nationalism*. 176.

substantiate by pointing out that in these very early years the ANC lacked the foresight to realise the value of the international domain. But that was quick to perceive the wisdom of changing strategies after its banning in 1960, is undeniable.

Further opportunities for the ANC to develop international contacts and to become involved internationally were provided by the formation of the United Nations in 1945. Exposure to organisations and individuals who were sympathetic to the plight of the African majority came through the intervention of the Council on African Affairs (CAA), a US organisation led by Paul Robeson and Max Yergan, and one responsible for drawing attention of African Americans to South Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Von Eschen in her attempts to document the politics of the African Diaspora in this period, focused at some length on relationships developed between African Americans and the ANC, with specific reference to the CAA and the ANC, thus providing further evidence of the early contacts between US organisations and the ANC and their joint work at the UN in 1946 and 1947.

I found her study to be particularly valuable to my endeavours as she successfully demonstrated how African Americans became directly involved with the ANC and the Joint Passive Resistance Council to oppose discrimination against Indians in South Africa and the latter's attempts to annex South West Africa.<sup>23</sup> What is significant about these efforts is the work of the CAA in trying to lobby a somewhat recalcitrant state department. This was done through letters sent to President Truman and to the State Department, by generating negative publicity about South Africa through its campaigns and press conferences and the hosting of ANC leaders such as Dr. Xuma who was travelling to the USA for medical treatment.<sup>24</sup> During this visit Dr. Xuma was also assisted by the South African Indian Congress who also arranged for him to meet with

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<sup>22</sup> The Council on African Affairs was formed in 1937 and became a major proponent of the ideals of Anti-Colonialism and Pan Africanism in the USA and abroad. It survived until 1955 when it became a victim of Cold War politics.

<sup>23</sup> Penny Marie Von Eschen. "African Americans and Anti-Colonialism." 139. See also Bernard Makhozeze Magubane. The Ties that Bind: African American Consciousness of Africa

<sup>24</sup> These letters called for support to be given to the Indian government's call to protest South Africa's treatment of Indians. The campaigns included those such as the CAA's 'Big Three Unity Rally' held in Madison Square Gardens in June 1946 and which drew attention to South Africa. At the CAA press conferences, Smuts was accused of 'serving the interests of U. S. imperialism and the present makers of US policy. See Von Eschen. "African Americans and Anti-Colonialism." 183.

the Indian delegation to the UN. In terms of the specific brief of the visit, Xuma's attempts were successful. The General Assembly rejected South Africa's request to annex South West Africa by a vote of thirty six to zero.<sup>25</sup>

What is also important about Von Eschen's study is the evidence she has provided to show how US reaction to issues of race and discrimination made organisations such as the CAA and the ANC realise that they were really dealing with a country that could best be described as an adversary and not one to be looked upon as a potential ally. The reader also needs to be reminded that it was at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference of 1944 that the USA was one of the countries that rejected the resolution proposed by China opposing racial discrimination.<sup>26</sup> Hence any attempt to seek future assistance from the USA by the ANC would prove to be a mammoth endeavour as my study will illustrate.

In addition to Von Eschen's study there has been in recent years a growing body of literature of diaspora studies. These have helped locate the relationships that developed between African Americans and ANC individuals and which grew exponentially by the 1980s, within the ambit of African American/Black internationalism against apartheid.

A major contribution to these conversations about diaspora and nations is the study undertaken by Nikhil Pal Singh, a work that merits scrutiny for the purposes of my endeavour. Singh crafted a history of the civil rights movement and the role of Martin Luther King Jr. in the twentieth century by linking it to the global struggle for social justice and racial equality. In providing a fresh alternative analysis he used evidence to strengthen his argument that King had never embraced the struggle as one devoted purely to obtaining rights for the Black people of the USA, but as one responsible "for achieving a broader transformation of the United States into an equitable society". In so doing he provided keen insight into how the black struggles in the USA could be interpreted as representing a critical component of the "ambiguous legacy of post-World War 11 decolonisation"<sup>27</sup>. This argument allowed him to discount insular analyses of the

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<sup>25</sup> Von Eschen. "African Americans and Anti-Colonialism." 183.

<sup>26</sup> This conference was convened to focus on post war organization of the world, and included proposals for peace and security.

<sup>27</sup> Nikhil Pal Singh. *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge. Harvard University Press, 2004). 53. See also Michelle Ann Stephens. *The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States 1914-1962* (Durham. Duke University Press, 2005) In this

civil rights era, instead demonstrating that this was a form of “modern black activism”, focusing efforts on wider global issues such as anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism.

In relation to contentions in this chapter, what was found to be particularly appealing about Singh’s work was that he was able to successfully prove that such a form of activism led to a wide spectrum of black activists and intellectuals from the USA uniting their own aspirations with those of global struggles in Ghana, Cuba, Congo, South Africa, India and Vietnam. In addition to this he extensively explored the associated roles of others such as Booker T. Washington, Ralph Bunche, Malcolm X and W.E.B. Du Bois. In relation to the South African struggle, Singh alluded to those such as Bunche who “pushed young black activists to cast their global vision even wider and to propel ‘the tragic plight of many millions of black people in the Union of South Africa under Apartheid’ into the court of world opinion.”<sup>28</sup> These arguments succeeded in positioning future support of African- American intellectuals and activists for participation in the struggle against Apartheid. Such participation also played a crucial role in the ANC’s attempts to develop a relationship with the US state. Without these early interventions, which influenced African-American perceptions of the need to support global struggles, the battle for the soul of US society would have been far more challenging for the ANC.

Since internal matters dominated the concerns of the membership, international interaction during this period through the latter years of 1948, appeared limited. Aside from Rev. Calata, none of the other leaders appeared to take any interest in cultivating the international arena.<sup>29</sup> In his address to the Cape African National Congress in 1938, he tried to explain why attention should be focused on this area. What is important is that he recognised that “our salvation does not depend on our coming together.”<sup>30</sup> He

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study Stephens focuses on the concept of “transnational blackness” by examining the works of intellectuals such as Marcus Garney, Claude McKay and C.L.R James. She demonstrates how these thinkers developed concepts related to global racial movements and black political bodies that surpassed national boundaries.

<sup>28</sup> Singh. *Black is a Country*. 210.

<sup>29</sup> Reverend James Calata, an Anglican Minister from the Cape was the Secretary-General of the ANC. A man of vision who was not shy to explore new strategy and tactics to reinvigorate the ANC, he played a significant role in bringing Xuma into the ANC fold because he saw the latter as the saviour of the ANC and one who held similar views to himself. This was a reference to Mr. Ballinger’s role at highlighting the question of payment of African Mine labourers traveling expenses. This he did at the International Labour Conference in Geneva.

<sup>30</sup> “Presidential Address”, by Rev. J. A. Calata, In Karis and Carter. *From Protest to Challenge, Vol 2*, 136-137.

went on to point out that “we have individuals who represent us in international conferences overseas.”<sup>31</sup>

As established earlier on, ANC activity was introduced at the UN through the CAA and the Joint Passive Resistance Committee and it was Dr. Xuma who played an important role. While he was present to protest the annexation issue, ANC officials believed that Dr. Xuma could use these issues to present its own case. Like Plaatje at the Pan African Congresses, Xuma was able to make contact with a number of foreign groups and delegations, some of whom were supportive of his efforts. But the reality was that the majority of delegates did not offer much in the way of inspiration or motivation. And it was Mary Benson, who writing in 1966, pointed out that “it was hard work” especially since little was known about South Africa and there was the belief that “General Smuts could do no wrong.”<sup>32</sup> But fortunately for Xuma and the representatives of the South African Indian Congress, assistance came in the form of ‘ammunition’ provided by the South African Government’s handling of the mines strike, the imprisonment of 1000 passive resisters and the scandal caused by the African housing shortage.<sup>33</sup>

Benson’s work represents an important contribution to early attempts to document the freedom struggle and was produced at one of the darkest times in South Africa’s history when such investigations were rare. Her study of how “African Internationalism” confronted “white Isolationism” provided a keen insight into the early attempts by the

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<sup>31</sup> “Presidential Address”.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Benson. *The Struggle for a Birthright* (London, Penguin, 1966). 111.

<sup>33</sup> Frustrated by the rising cost of living during the war and food shortages, African workers became more aggrieved, resulting in the black trade unions becoming stronger. In April 1946, the African Mine Workers Union presented a set of demands which included a minimum wage of ten shillings per day, family housing as there was a critical shortage of housing for Africans, paid leave and the repeal of the War Measures Act 1425 which prohibited gatherings of more than 20 workers. It was not surprising that the Mine owners nor the government capitulated, with the result that between 12-16 August, more than 70 000 mine workers went on strike on 12 mines. According to Steven Gish, in his study of Xuma, this was the biggest strike South Africa had ever seen. With Smut’s order to use force, 1600 policeman were called out to deal with the strikers, arresting 1000 miners, injuring 1200 and killing at least 9. In the same year, the Smuts government announced its decision to introduce the Asiatic land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill which would restrict the rights of Indians to own or occupy land. As a method of organizing resistance to what Indians described as ‘The Ghetto Act’, Passive resistance Councils were set up under the leadership of Dr. G. M. Naicker, the President of the Natal Indian Congress and Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, the President of the Transvaal Indian Congress. When the act came into being on 2 June 1946, the passive resistance by Indians began and continued until 1948 when passive resistance was suspended. Also violence of an unprecedented nature was perpetrated by white hooligans who attacked Indian resisters, even killing one. Police stood by and let this happen until widespread protest, including condemnation by Mahatma Gandhi, forced Smuts and his government to act. They acted by arresting the passive resisters with the result that 1000 resisters were arrested in 1946 alone.

ANC to lobby the UN. This study also provided the necessary evidence for me to conclude that Xuma was successful to an extent, and with the help of CAA activities of drawing the international spotlight on the general issue of racism. Also it was this effort that would pave the way for any future consideration of racism, which was flagged as a key post-war issue.<sup>34</sup>

The role of Xuma in establishing early personal contacts has been explored extensively by Steven Gish who like Willan writing about Plaatje, was of the view that Xuma's importance in the history of South Africa has been marginalised. In view of Xuma's personal and ideological links to the USA which began in 1913, Gish focused at length on this area arguing that "Xuma continued to admire the American constitution" and alluded to "his long standing admiration for American ideals and institutions" although he became interested in the rest of Africa by the 1950s."<sup>35</sup>

Having argued that up to World War 11 and the early years, the ANC considered the international arena to be marginal to their internal activities. Yet at the same time examples have been furnished to argue that efforts were made to communicate their plight to the rest of the world. But what is noteworthy is the part played by countries such as India in communicating the dilemma of South Africa's majority to the rest of the world, in making racism a world issue at the United Nations and in its unwavering solidarity with the African struggle. Although the United Nations was formed as a result of the war against Nazi racism, western countries had not become sensitive to racism against non-white peoples. For Enuga Sreenwasulu Reddy, the former Director of the UN Centre against Apartheid, this was demonstrated by the "colonial wars that followed the end of the world war." This area of India's solidarity with the oppressed majority of South Africa has been extensively documented by Reddy, who continues to be a most valuable resource on this area to this day.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Benson. *Struggle for a Birthright*, 111.

<sup>35</sup> Steven Gish. *Alfred B. Xuma: African American, South African*. 189.

<sup>36</sup> E. S. Reddy, 'Indian Passive Resistance in South Africa, 1946-1948' in "United Nations, India and South Africa's Liberation Struggle: A Collection of Articles".3. Documentation Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus, Durban. Another useful source by the same author is Reddy. *India and South Africa: A Collection of Papers*. Occasional Paper Series, University of Durban-Westville. 1991. Enuga Reddy is an Indian National who was a committed supporter of South Africa's freedom struggle for almost five decades. He retired from the United Nations in 1985 and devoted his time to writing extensively about the struggle in South Africa, the role of the United Nations and the relationship between India and South Africa. He held an extensive collection of personal papers which have

The ANC was presented with another opportunity in international networking in 1945 when the Pan African Congress was held in Manchester. The benefit of this Congress to the ANC was discerned from its participants who represented many African national movements. Also significant was the presence of leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Kamazu Banda and Wallace Johnson-all of whom were to play a significant role on the African continent.<sup>37</sup> At the Conference, links were established by the ANC with nationalist movements of East and West Africa, movements which shared many general similarities with the South African group. Moreover many of the resolutions passed at Manchester emphasized themes of importance to anti-colonial movements.<sup>38</sup>

While I would accept that these groups lacked the ability to radically change the political systems of their respective countries or that the links developed by the ANC with them, did not in any manner increase their effectiveness in opposing the South African government, I believe that downgrading the value of the congress to the ANC would be unfair. This is so because it was evident that the ANC's presence in Manchester helped lay the foundation for the placement of the South African struggle within the ambit of the anti-colonialism efforts that developed throughout Africa.

Moving onto the area of personal links, evidence was found to support the view that there were bonds in existence between key ANC leaders and the USA. For example, Z. K. Matthews received a graduate degree from Yale University, Dr. Alfred Xuma, who received part of his medical training in the same country, married Madie Hall, an American in the United States. Even Chief Luthuli developed certain bonds with the US which he visited in 1948 on a speaking tour, and which was sponsored by the American Board and the North American Missionary Conference.

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subsequently been donated to Yale University in the USA, the Nehru Museum in New Delhi and the Universities of Witwatersrand and Durban-Westville in South Africa. I met him during my years at Yale University while working on his personal papers. Since then his friendship has become very important to me especially upon my return to this country.

<sup>37</sup> Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict." 66

<sup>38</sup> Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict." 67.

In his autobiography, Luthuli wrote about this visit which allowed him to increase awareness in the USA of the African dilemma.<sup>39</sup> This was no fleeting initiative for he continued to believe up to his death that the USA could be helpful to the ANC's plight. The reason for this view was interesting and was gleaned from an interview recorded by Studs Turkel with the Chief during his visit to South Africa in 1960. In the interview he pointed out that "America can do much to assist our liberation here," as "you fought to free yourselves from Mother England...you are still trying to stand for freedom for all." Even Turkel admitted that he was astounded by this perception given the fact that Chief Luthuli was well aware of the USA's corporate involvement in South Africa by the 1960s.<sup>40</sup>

According to John Douglas Nelson, by the early 1950s the value of focusing on the international arena appeared to gain ground although ANC activities in this regard were not related to any broader and more coordinated strategy and appeared "to have had an ad hoc character."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless it was clear that they gravitated towards the anti-colonial movement in Africa and Asia. Nelson, in his study attempted to place the development and operation of the ANC from 1912 to 1970, within the context of informal diplomacy. By examining its attempts to position itself internationally, he argued that up to 1970, the movement was unsuccessful in this endeavour because it was unable to demonstrate any degree of success in its internal activities.

Using various theoretical models such as that advanced by George Modelski, John Douglas Nelson concluded that "most outside supporters are likely to decline meaningful involvement in internal conflicts until a group or a movement has demonstrated its ability to be successful."<sup>42</sup> But this conclusion was rather premature and short sighted. For while the movement did not have an international policy, its resistance strategies

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<sup>39</sup> Luthuli. *Let My People Go*. 80-84.

<sup>40</sup> Studs Turkel. *Talking to Myself: A Memoir of My Times* (New York. The New Press, 1995). 135. Turkel was a disc jockey for a daily programme on WFMT Radio in Chicago. Having captured the voices of international icons, Turkel traveled widely and this included a visit to South Africa. Having met him at the Chicago Historical Society in 1996, the institution to which he donated his valuable oral history interview collection, I was encouraged to listen to him speak fondly and in an extremely informed manner about Chief Luthuli. His anecdotes about this meeting will remain etched in my memory.

<sup>41</sup> Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal conflict." 181.

<sup>42</sup> George Modelski. "International Relations of Internal War," in James N. Rosenau(ed.). *International Aspects of Civil Strife* (Princeton. Princeton University Press, 1965). Cited by Nelson. 231.

were successful and as such did slowly succeed in drawing the attention of the international community to its plight.

### ***Early Influences in Developing an International Policy***

The ANC's views of its international attempts were interesting. While it admitted that it may not have had any policy in place to develop relations, the movement was at pains to point out that it had a foreign policy. This I found clear in its December 1954 "Report to the National Executive Committee," in which it included a section on the 'International Situation', and alluded to "the cardinal points of our foreign policy" which were "opposition to war...and opposition to colonialism and white domination."<sup>43</sup> It even went further to explain its specific programme. But what is important about this section is that the ANC was beginning to develop a set of international foreign policy principles which would guide its choice of international allies.

It is true, the struggle will only be fought by Africans themselves under their own independent leadership, but they will have to keep a very clear eye open for international developments detrimental or advantageous to us. We must look for allies... [and] we must ask....the following regarding any potential ally: (1) Is this country or group in the imperialist camp or in the anti-imperialist camp? (2) Is this country or group for equality or for racial discrimination? (3) Is this group pro-African or anti-African freedom? (4) Is this country or group anti-colonialist.<sup>44</sup>

In a report of the National Executive Committee submitted to its Annual Conference of 1958, there were more references to an international policy as the ANC gave a precise indication that its foreign policy principles flowed from the resolutions of the Bandung Conference of 1955. The report went further to list the themes of anti-colonialism, equality of races, one-man-one-vote, opposition to war and support for nationalist movements around the world as major elements guiding their international directives.<sup>45</sup> While Nelson believed that this report was important because it demonstrated that the "foreign policy outlook remained unchanged from 1954," I would argue that its

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (Eds.). From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa. 1882-1964. Vol. 3., Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart. Challenge and Violence 1953-1964 (Stanford. Hoover Institute Press, 1977). 345.

<sup>44</sup> This 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the ANC was held in Durban from 13-14 December 1958. African National Congress Records 1928-1975. BA6. Historical Papers, University of Witwatersrand.

<sup>45</sup> The importance of Bandung to the ANC was also captured in the ANC's online publication. See ANC Today. Vol 5, No.6. 22-28 April 2005. Moses Kotane, General Secretary of the Communist Party, a member of the NEC of the ANC and then Treasurer-General of the ANC in Tanzania, was present at Bandung as an observer. Accompanying him was Indian Congress Leader, Molvi Cachalia and Brian Bunting. Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary (London. Inkululeko Publications, 1975). 208, 209.

importance lay in its ability to demonstrate that the ANC was already considering a framework for its foreign policy.<sup>46</sup>

While the foreign policy framework of the movement was influenced by many global events, the ANC was clear that the Bandung Conference of April 1955, and the resolutions that flowed from it, exercised a far greater influence. The conference, which was held in Indonesia, and was attended by 29 Asian and African nations, resolved to ask the United Nations to provide more funds for the economic development of Afro-Asian countries. The conference also resolved to fight until the last remnants of colonialism were obliterated from the world. One can therefore understand why the ANC would find this forum to be appealing for its foreign policy work. Moreover, this gathering provided a significant international point of contact, especially with the Afro-Asian anti colonialists movements.

The ANC was represented by Moses Kotane and E. M. Nodge. Also present at the meeting was Y. A. Cachalia, the leader of the South African Indian Council (SAIC). However Nelson has contended that although these individuals were listed as official observers of the ANC and SAIC, their attendance did not have the ‘official sanction’ of the ANC.<sup>76</sup> According to Jordan Ngubane, they attended the Bandung meeting while many of the leaders were banned or arrested and that although they had notified Chief Luthuli about their attendance, they never sought the approval of the ANC. But whether the ANC officially sanctioned this visit or not, is a matter of little significance compared to manner in which it officially reported on the value of the conference. For example, in its 1958 report, the NEC reported that “Bandung marked a new era” and that “it was one of the most important events of our time.”<sup>47</sup> There was no doubt that the ANC felt inspired by the conference and its resolutions.

While it was clear that the ANC assumed that once world opinion was mobilized, constructive action would subsequently follow, it was not until 1958 that some clarity was provided on what was expected of the other countries in support of African South Africans. A study of internal minutes and memoranda revealed that in spite of a more definitive foreign policy directive, the African National Congress remained bound to its

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<sup>46</sup> Nelson. “Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict.” 135.

<sup>47</sup> Records of the ANC. Wits University. BA6.

internal activities and to the attainment of its objectives without any noteworthy form of external assistance.

### ***Internal Developments, ANC Responses and the USA***

Being bound to internal activities was critical for the ANC, especially after the victory of the Nationalist Party government in 1948. The white election secured a fragile win obtained purely on a racist platform, thus pushing the organisation to far more significant action. In view of this environment, it will be argued that the ANC responded by undertaking more extensive internal campaigns which solicited ruthless and extreme government responses. Suffering the effects of such responses, the movement also faced some organisational problems, which rendered many organisational operations ineffectual. Nelson has attributed these problems and weaknesses to four major problems: discipline, coordination, lack of finances and communication.<sup>48</sup> For Nelson Mandela, these difficulties stemmed from the ‘independence of branch leaders.’<sup>49</sup> It was for this reason that he recommended the M-Plan, which could have assisted in the creation of a highly centralised and disciplined structure.<sup>50</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, the ANC faced a number of other pressures, thus making the need for a new strategy such the necessity of tapping into the international domain, more necessary and urgent. Its campaigns failed, its leaders were imprisoned, government action against the movement continued relentlessly-all of which contributed to its decision to draw the international spotlight into its future strategies in a more effective manner. In view of the draconian measures implemented by the South African government, the ANC eventually acknowledged the importance, for its long-term

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<sup>48</sup> Nelson. “Some Aspects of Internal Conflict.” 120. Communication problems within the country acted as a source of decentralisation. Distances between cities, sparsely populated areas, and restraints placed on African abilities to travel freely and without harassment-all intensified the communication dilemmas. Interviews conducted with Joe Matthews (18 September 2000), Peter Pyise (February 2001) and Simon Mkana (August 2001) indicate that they were compelled to rely on haphazard methods of conveying information to members. For example, information was disseminated through pamphlets distributed by hand, through the mail and through personal contact. Interviewees recalled that even at branch level, offices were poorly armed with adequate information. This affected planning at the national level as national proposal plans were usually produced without any in dept knowledge of the situation prevailing at branch and provincial levels-a clear recipe for disaster.

<sup>49</sup> Ruth First (ed.). *Nelson Mandela: No Easy Walk to Freedom*. 73.

<sup>50</sup> The M-Plan was an emergency resistance network. Worked out by Nelson Mandela, the aim of the plan was to inform, mobilize and recruit members. See also Edward Feit. *The Dynamics of the African National Congress*. 61.

survival, of locating its internal activities within the global setting. In short, its haphazard attempts at international networking through individual contacts and petition oriented activities were no longer viable. A long term strategic planning initiative for the articulation of a programme of foreign relations was vital.

As indicated earlier, with intensified state action, the ANC was compelled to respond with greater action which took the form of many national campaigns of which the Defiance Campaign of 1952 against Unjust Laws, the Bantu Education and Anti-Pass Laws had the greatest influence on the growth of the organisation.<sup>51</sup> While this campaign marked a turning point in the struggle for freedom, the white state took greater strides “towards authoritarianism,” causing participants to become less enthusiastic about their role in the campaign.<sup>52</sup> In relation to my arguments relating to the ANC and the USA, the value of the Defiance Campaign can be gauged from its influence on the civil rights movement in the USA and on young Martin Luther King, Jr. Pioneering anti-apartheid activists from the USA, such as William Minter and George Houser have alluded to this.<sup>53</sup>

Covering Nelson Mandela’s visit to the US in July 1990, correspondents for *Time Magazine* continued in this vein by pointing out that “American civil rights activists...used the struggle in South Africa as a rallying cry” from the 1950s for their own struggle in the US, even through until the 1980s.<sup>54</sup> In his epic study *No One can Stop the Rain*, Houser took a close look at the actions of the ANC in South Africa and at US Policy arguing that international action on its own was not effective to bring down the apartheid state, but that it was important to communicate to the South African state that

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<sup>51</sup> The Defiance campaign began in 1952 and was aimed at bringing an end to the *Suppression of Communism Act* of 1950, the Pass laws, the *Bantu Authorities Act* of 1951, the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Separate Registration Voters Act of 1951.

<sup>52</sup> Luthuli. *Let My People Go*. 117.

<sup>53</sup> In his presentation entitled ‘African Liberation and Progressive Internationalism in American Life: An Untold Story’ to the Conference on “Celebrating a Decade of Freedom: The Role of International Anti-Apartheid Movements in South Africa’s Freedom Struggle”, Univ. of KwaZulu-Natal, October 10-13 2004, Minter demonstrated how the many South African protests and campaigns influenced organisations and individuals in the USA.

<sup>54</sup> See Richard Lacayo, Julie Johnson, Sylvester Monroe and Janice Simpson. *Time Magazine* (2 July 1990). For the US Civil rights activists, the 1980s was a difficult time as the Reagan administration treated the agenda of these activists with ‘indifference’ and ‘hostility’. Concerns about affirmative actions dominated the agenda in these years.

“the world will no longer support the injustice of apartheid.”<sup>55</sup> For Houser, the Defiance Campaign was important because this campaign “introduced him to the African Liberation Struggle” initiated by the ANC. His interest in this campaign was generated by its non-violent principles which influenced his work to “combat segregation in the United States.”

Aside from its influence on many like Houser and Minter, it did manage to gain some attention in the USA. Through Houser’s efforts, supporters of the South African struggle from New York formed an ad hoc support group for the Defiance Campaign called Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR). The group saw themselves as a channel for information in the US about the campaign and as a fundraising body. As a result, AFSAR sent \$5000 to South Africa during the campaign, much of it through ZK Mathews.<sup>56</sup>

Whatever the short term successes of ANC national campaigns, it can only be concluded that given the repressive action of the South African state and the resultant sufferings of the African people, the ANC was no closer to realising its goals of freedom than it was before it embarked on the campaigns of resistance. The situation was complicated by their split in 1958 from the Africanists who went on to form the Pan Africanists Congress (PAC) under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe. This division within the movement was to remain a major affliction of the struggle for liberation until 1994, although this can be considered a feature of history. But it must also be pointed out that other factors contributed to this split as well. They could be attributed to the changes that were taking place on the African continent at this time.

In fact from 1958-1960 the issue of African liberation in some parts of the African continent were becoming a reality. In 1958, delegates to the All-Africa People’s Conference (AAPC), declared 1960 to be the ‘Year of Africa’ and by 1960, there were references to the ‘winds of change’ on the African continent. These emanated from an

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<sup>55</sup> George M. Houser. No One Can stop the Rain. 365. George Houser was an ordained Methodist clergyman who helped found the American Committee in Africa and served as its Executive Director from 1955-1981. His study was a valuable source for learning about the early contacts between ANC activists, leaders and US Civil society. These early relationships shaped future patterns of the relationship between the ANC and the USA.

<sup>56</sup> Houser. No One Can Stop the Rain. 14-16. See also the correspondence between Houser and Matthews. ACOA Collection.

address made by the then British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan to the Joint Houses of Parliament in Cape Town on 3 February 1960 in which he cautioned colonial powers on the need to make way for a new order on the continent.<sup>57</sup> Macmillan's address captured the attention of Africans on the continent, including those in South Africa who now accepted, rather prematurely, that freedom was an inevitable event. Within this decade ten countries on the continent had gained their independence and within three years of Macmillan's speech, the Organisation of African Unity was formed. Given these continental developments, it was not unreasonable to find Africanists in South Africa riding high on the crest of inevitable freedom, resulting in their decision to use this opportunity to split from the ANC.

But before proceeding, the reader needs to be reminded also of the value of the African continent within the context of global developments such as the Cold War. While this will be examined at some length in the next chapter, it would suffice to point out at this juncture that from the late 1950s and early 1960s, Africa came to represent one of the major battlegrounds of the East/West encounters. This occurred as Washington began to be drawn more directly into the colonial affairs in Africa and Asia and was evidenced by the crisis in countries such as Egypt, Algeria and Congo.

The ramifications of this ANC/PAC split were clearly disastrous for the ANC's attempts to advance the struggle. Evidence for this came from the views shared by members of the solidarity organisations in the USA and by leaders of the ANC itself. For instance, in a letter to Chief Luthuli on 10 June 1959, George Houser of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) communicated his concern "about the rise of the Africanists and the split that this seems to imply to some extent in the ANC."<sup>58</sup> Mandela, who was very bitter about this split saw the rivalry between two organisations as "sabotage of the popular struggle" and criticised the PAC for "blundering right from the beginning."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Dorbabji. "South African National Congress." 173.

<sup>58</sup> George Houser to Chief Albert J. Luthuli. 10 June 1959. South African Correspondence Files, Box 100. American Committee on Africa Archives, Amistad Research Centre.

<sup>59</sup> Mandela shared these views in his article entitled 'Out of the Strike' written in 1961 and which focused on the May Strikes in 1961 which pushed for the formation of a National Convention which could lead to the development of a democratic constitution. At this time Mandela was the Honorary Secretary of the All-in-African National Council in South Africa, formed in May 1961 to call for the formation of the National Convention. Nelson Mandela. 'Out of the Strike'. *Africa South in Exile*. Vol.6 No.1. (October-December 1961) 15.

Coming hot on the heels of the Congress of the People at Kliptown, the stage was set for a massive offensive by the state against the members of the organisation. In April 1956, the Minister of Justice, Mr. C. R. Swart, announced in the House of Assembly that the police were about to make some 200 arrests on charges of high treason. With the result that in a pre-dawn raid on December 1956, 156 people were arrested and charged under the Suppression of Communism Act, with plotting to overthrow the government through violent means.<sup>60</sup> The raid was clearly anything but unobtrusive as details of the arrests were around the world.

What is critical is how the state tried unsuccessfully, in its charges, to link the freedom struggle with Marxism and its espoused ideology of the forceful overthrow of the state, and in this case, the South African state. The way the state handled his trial helps one understand how the state engineered charges by linking activities to Marxism<sup>61</sup>. In sum, the state accused the ANC and its allies of treason through means of revolutionary activity. Such accusations were not lost on the USA which used these to guide its relationship with the ANC in later years. For the ANC, which had to that point always embarked on non-violent campaigns and activities, the charges made a mockery of its virtues.

The trial placed the activities of the ANC in the international arena as the plight of its leaders was publicised throughout the world. In the USA, the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) under Houser played a critical role in setting up funding initiatives for the treason accused and for conscientising the USA public about the trials. Given the complexities of the cold war being played out across the globe, Washington's persistence in believing that the communist menace had secured its stranglehold on Africa's foremost liberation movement proved to be a challenge for those like Houser. This made his work even more arduous. The ACOA set up the South African Defence Fund in the USA which eventually contributed over \$75000 to the legal defence during the trial.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> South Africa's Treason Trial (Afrika Publication. 1957, Houghton) 14.

<sup>61</sup> In a well researched article entitled "The Great Smear," Duma Nokwe, then Secretary-General of the ANC, captured the state's attempts during the 1956 Treason Trial to demonstrate the extent of the communist influence on the ANC. He also provided evidence of the USA state paranoia about the Communist infiltration of the ANC. Africa South in Exile. Vol 6, October –December 1961. 5,6.

<sup>62</sup> Evidence of the extent of the role of the ACOA and the Defence Fund in raising and sending funds to South Africans between 1952-1959 can be found in the extensive correspondence between Houser and liberation leaders and other South African activists. The latter included those such as Chief Luthuli, ZK Mathews, Frieda Mathews (wife of ZK Mathews), OR Tambo, Joe Mathews, Duma Nokwe, Alan Paton

According to Houser, the most important project of the ACOA was to arrange for the Dean of the Harvard Law School, Erwin Griswold, to go to South Africa as an expert legal observer at the trial. Other activities included programmes and campaigns in New York, which, said Houser, “aroused the ire of the South African government.”<sup>63</sup>

Three years later, the state dropped the case. Evidence from this time has pointed to the positive effect that the state’s action had on the ANC, thus allowing me to argue that it clearly helped to enhance the profile of the ANC. For US sympathisers the formation of the Defence fund “signalled the kind of international support to come as the struggle in South Africa intensified.”<sup>64</sup> Further evidence to support these contentions was provided by Elena Venturini Dorabji, who, in her doctoral dissertation on the ANC, traced the reasons for the latter’s tactical changes from one of non-violence to sabotage and violence, as a means of trying to “carve out for its followers a greater share of political power.”<sup>65</sup>

I found Dorabji’s approach refreshing for in attempting to explain the reasons for the ANC’s changing strategies, she simultaneously tried to explore the “revolutionary potential of South Africa”, by drawing on the theory of Chalmers Johnson.<sup>66</sup> Hence she was able to demonstrate that as a result of this trial, the way was paved for the ANC to forge more communication networks with the rest of the world. Even Mandela, she pointed out, urged members to use this opportunity to take the message of the ANC abroad, both into Europe and North Africa.<sup>67</sup> For the ANC and its sympathizers the trial brought the realisation that ‘the spirit of man is undying and rises like the Phoenix from

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and Bishop Ambrose Reeve, the Bishop of Johannesburg-to name a few. The sums sent were large. For example \$25 820 was sent to South Africa between May 1957 and September 1958. What is also interesting about this collection of correspondence is that it provides unique data about how the funds were raised and who contributed. One notable contributor was Chester Bowles who was appointed Under-Secretary of State by President John F. Kennedy. ACOA Archives, Box 100. For ZK Mathews, the Fund became the channel of “American financial assistance to help meet certain kinds of needs in Africa or to aid Africans in the United States”.(ZK Mathews to Houser 30/11/59).ACOA Archives, Box 100.

<sup>63</sup> Houser. No One Can Stop the Rain. 122.

<sup>64</sup> See Houser. No One Can Stop the Rain. 123.

<sup>65</sup> Elena Venturini Dorabji. “South African National Congress.” 4.

<sup>66</sup> Chalmers Johnson formulated a theory of revolution, positing the view that ‘disequilibrium’ in society will result in the only form of extreme action-violence. See Chalmers Johnson. Revolutionary Change (Boston, Little Brown. 1966). Dorabji has used this theory to support her arguments on the reasons for the ANC turning to sabotage as a new tactic to bring down the apartheid state.

<sup>67</sup> Dorabji. “South African National Congress.” 146.

the fires of the deepest oppression.”<sup>68</sup> While the trial was viewed as just another formidable obstacle placed in the path of liberation, it was not considered powerful enough to turn aside the wind of protest which was already sown by the accused. This spirit of euphoria though commendable, did not acknowledge the other obstacles placed on this path to liberation. These took the form of organisational problems, tactical problems and ideological problems.<sup>69</sup>

However during a period of self reflection in prison in the 1970s, Mandela wrote about this period admitting that the ANC was aware of its tactical failures. Evidence for this admission was provided by the Mandela prison letters that were written to his family in this period.<sup>70</sup> Even at the leadership level, it was accepted from certain quarters, that passive resistance as a *modus operandi* was not effective in challenging the state. In view of the tone of the Macmillan speech and the impending reality of the end of colonialism, and its influence on liberation organisations, it would not have been unusual if it created a climate of panic for the state. But the latter was comfortable with its attempts to entrench its minority power. Hence as argued by Dorabji, “the white oligarchy believed that no struggle would be attempted and that the winds of change would pass South Africa by.”<sup>71</sup> But the actions of the PAC were to reverse such confidence as the events of 1960 in Sharpeville and Langa demonstrated.<sup>72</sup> With the result that on the 31 March 1960, using its emergency powers, the government declared a state of emergency resulting in the banning of the ANC and the PAC, the arrest and detention of persons considered to be a danger to the public interests and the banning of public meetings of all races in number of districts. Over 30 000 people were imprisoned without trial. The State of Emergency was lifted after five months, but South Africa was never the same again.

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<sup>68</sup> *Treason Trial*, 16.

<sup>69</sup> These included poor communications, geographical isolation, leadership problems, the ANC’s reliance on the passive resistance strategy.

<sup>70</sup> This was one box of letters that found its way from Robben Island to the President’s office in the ANC when Mandela was President of the Party in 1996. This was an unusual case as prison letters were still held by the then Department of Safety and Security.

<sup>71</sup> Dorabji. “South African National Congress.” 178.

<sup>72</sup> Hijacking the ANC’s strategy to undertake anti-pass campaigns in April, the PAC issued a circular dated 20 March announcing the launch of its anti-pass campaign. (See Robert Sobukwe to Major General Rademeyer, 16 March 1960, ANC Archives, Mission records, Lusaka Mission, Sharpeville, Box 41). Feeling threatened by the gathering of people on 21 March 1960 at Sharpeville Police Station, police fired on several thousand of these protestors, killing 72 and injuring 186. That same evening further violence was perpetrated by police in the township of Langa, killing 2 protestors and injuring 49.

Sharpeville was a turning point in many respects, especially since the banning of the ANC and PAC meant the large influx of activist leaders into a life of exile and the neutralising of the activities of the ANC. While this event was strategically used as a rallying cry for civil rights activists in the United States between 1960 and 1964 and later in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, it has still been argued from several quarters that US civil society failed to bank on crises such as Sharpeville to advance the ANC cause as well as that of the anti-apartheid movement.. In raising this issue with veteran US anti-apartheid activist William Minter, he explained that in the 1960s activist groups which comprised US civil society were “miniscule in comparison to the scope of US society: and that in general the idea of groups having impact on foreign policy was not particularly noticeable.” He went further to confirm that groups that existed, such as ACOA, did respond to Sharpeville, but their impact was very limited “outside of those sectors of opinion which were already inclined to be convinced.”<sup>73</sup> This meant an exclusion of those either in the executive branch or Congress.

But the effect of Sharpeville can be gauged from the role it played in the formation of organisations such as the *Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights* in the USA, which devoted much work to highlighting the plight of South Africans in that country.<sup>74</sup> Evidence has supported the view that Sharpeville did succeed in raising awareness of the international community in a far more significant manner than had previously been the case with other events. It galvanised the ACOA into action with the organisation initiating campaigns such as boycotts and creating media awareness.<sup>75</sup>

After his escape from South Africa, Oliver Tambo was invited to spend four weeks with **the** ACOA promoting the work of the ANC. But in view of problems he experienced with Washington, he was unable to take this visit. After the Treason Trial, even Nelson Mandela attempted to visit the USA, but as Benson pointed out, he was unable to obtain travel documents from both SA and the USA.<sup>76</sup> Yet surprisingly, barely 48 hours after Sharpeville the US State Department condemned the events arising out of Sharpeville.

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<sup>73</sup> E-mail interview with William Minter, 9 May 2009. Interview in possession of author.

<sup>74</sup> *One World Radio Africa*, Transcript entitled “International day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,” 21 March 2005 in <http://www.radioafrica.oneworld.net>.

<sup>75</sup> See Houser. *No One can Stop the Rain*. 128.

<sup>76</sup> Benson. *The Struggle for A Birthright*. 162.

The UN Security Council did the same on April 1 and received the support of the US Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, for its resolution.<sup>77</sup>

The struggle for liberation was never the same again as the ANC strategy had undergone a drastic change with Mandela and some of his colleagues finally turning their backs on that long African tradition of non-violence leading to the formation in November 1961 of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. In his 1964 speech from the dock, he explained that, in embarking on this course of action, they had reached the conclusion that "fifty years of non-violence had brought the African people nothing but more and more repressive legislation."<sup>78</sup> In fact, he added that the white government continued to remain unmoved by the African plight.

Embarkation on this path of violence by the ANC only resulted after years of disillusionment with existing tactics, yet this strategy did not prove to be effective in the short term. If anything it served to increase the ruthless onslaught of the South African authorities. With the result that on July 1963, the police raided the 28 acre farm in the white suburb of Rivonia.<sup>79</sup> The capture of the ANC's High Command was certainly a victory for the state and a devastating loss for the liberation movement. In 1962, Mandela was on a six month tour abroad to meet leaders of African states, with a trip to London as well, where he met with leaders of the opposition parties. On July 20, 1962 he returned to South Africa and on August 5, he was arrested outside Howick Natal, disguised as a chauffeur. Rumours circulated that the communists had betrayed Mandela. But it was clear that the USA played a key role in this arrest and for the purposes of this study, merits substantial scrutiny.<sup>80</sup>

The question often asked is how did the apartheid police get Mandela on 5 August 1962 and the answer in recent years has been that "he was stopped by the American CIA", committing him to a lifetime in prison(27 years) until his release in 1990.<sup>81</sup> For years speculation was rife that it was the CIA, under George Bush Snr. which played an

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<sup>77</sup> See resolution recorded by Houser. 127.

<sup>78</sup> Meer. *Higher than Hope*, 241. See also Dorabji. "South African National Congress." 178.

<sup>79</sup> Rivonia was the underground headquarters of the ANC and this raid netted the High Command of MK and many strategic documents for future sabotage activities.

<sup>80</sup> *New African* (October 2002). No. 411. 10.

<sup>81</sup> *New African*. (October 2002). No. 411. 10.

instrumental role in Mandela's arrest by collaborating closely with the apartheid state. But in 1986 stories were picked up on international networks such as CBS television in the USA on how police happened to know Mandela's whereabouts that day. The protagonist in this affair was Donald C. Rickard who informed the Special Branch of the South African police of Mandela's movements for that day and his disguise.<sup>82</sup> When the story of his role emerged, he maintained that he learned this information through an ANC informant. But in 1987, it was reported that at farewell party held for him at the home of Colonel Hoare, Rickard admitted, while in an intoxicated state, and in the presence of guests, that he was due to meet Mandela that night, but instead fed the information to the South African police. He was approached by CBS to elaborate on this confession, but he refused.<sup>83</sup>

Four years later, in June 1990, it was reported in the US media in Atlanta that a retired "US intelligence officer" had been informed by Paul Eckel, a senior CIA operative, within hours of Mandela's arrest that "we have turned Mandela over to the South African security branch...we gave them every detail...it is one of our greatest coups".<sup>84</sup> Such evidence clearly strengthens my argument of the US role in the Mandela arrest. But the ANC was not to know this until the 1980s, by which time it was successfully entrenching itself in the USA.

The Rivonia Sabotage Trial began in October 1963 and ended on June 12 1964 and appeared to have sealed the fate of the ANC and its leadership.<sup>85</sup> As it had done during the Treason Trial, the state's attempt to draw attention to the role of the communists within the movement did much harm to the ANC. Again this was going to adversely influence its future relationship with Washington where perceptions were created that the ANC, far from being a progressive liberation movement, was actually part of the legendary International Communist Conspiracy. By exaggerating the influence of the communists, the state gave the communists more credit that they deserved. No evidence emerged to justify the government's claim that the ANC was a front for the communists.

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<sup>82</sup> Rickard was a CIA officer who worked undercover as a consular official in Durban.

<sup>83</sup> Hoare was a notorious CIA mercenary. This story was related to me by Thomas Karis in New York in January 2000.

<sup>84</sup> *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* (10 June 1990).

<sup>85</sup> The ten major accused were Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Dennis Goldberg, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Lionel Bernstein, Raymond Mhlaba, James Kantor, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mhlangeni.

But there was no doubt that the ANC was indebted to the communists who were able to provide assistance to the ANC inside and outside the country. Assistance inside the country came from white communists like Ruth First and her husband, Joe Slovo, Harold Wolpe, Michael Harmel and others. But as appropriately pointed out by Dorabji, for the South African government, “the involvement of all these figures was proof enough that it was international communism which was on trial at Rivonia. It was a violent communist revolution and not African self determination that was the real issue.”<sup>86</sup> But this was not true.

It was evident that from the 1960s that the ANC wanted to open up the international battlefield with the intention of encouraging divestment and the international isolation of South Africa. By turning world opinion against the state, the movement hoped that this kind of pressure would coerce Pretoria into abandoning its oppressive policies. This also guided the logic of strategy to be outlined at the Morogoro Conference that was to take place in 1969. But without any intervention by the ANC, a new uprising in 1979 helped more than any other previous crisis or uprising, move it closer to achieving its goal.

### ***The Soweto Uprising***

The Soweto uprising, which began on 16 June 1976, has been well documented in a range of studies.<sup>87</sup> Therefore a focus on the events that led to the uprising or to the uprising itself is not necessary. This does not mean that the value of this uprising to the freedom struggle in South Africa has been downgraded. Rather an assessment of whether it succeeded in influencing attitudes in the US, will be undertaken. No study of the ANC in this period can be conducted in isolation to the aftermath of this uprising. It will be demonstrated that Soweto aided, if not grudgingly, the ANC’s attempts to draw the attention of the international arena, especially the US, to the extent of the apartheid atrocities. Undoubtedly it provided the ANC with many new opportunities in world politics, including the attempts to develop a favourable relationship with the US.

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<sup>86</sup> Dorabji. “South African National Congress.” 241.

<sup>87</sup> These studies include John Kane Berman. *Soweto: Black Revolt, White Racism* (Johannesburg. Ravan Press, 1978); Bernard Magubane. *From Soweto to Uitenhage: The Political Economy of the South African Revolution* (New Jersey. Africa World Press, 1989); SM Ndlovu. *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter Memories of June 1976* (Randburg. Ravan Press, 1998).

In order to explore the opportunities, it will be necessary to look at what the Soweto uprising meant for the apartheid government, for the majority of South Africa's oppressed and for the ANC itself. But again it would be emphasised that the ANC played no role in instigating such an uprising. As alluded to earlier on, the uprising took both, the South African Government and the ANC, by surprise.<sup>88</sup> The resulting reactions merit scrutiny as changes in strategic planning and policy-making initiatives undertook markedly new paths.

Once the uprising began, the ANC tried to make use of the event by infiltrating student networks such as the Soweto Student's Representative Council (SSRC). This was evident in the case of ANC operatives in Mozambique who made contact with the SSRC through Elias Masinga.<sup>89</sup> Another such link was established by ANC veteran in Soweto, Elliot Shabangu, through his nephew, Super Mloi, who was an SSRC insider. But there is no significant evidence to suggest that the ANC laboured to intensify the revolt once it broke out. Neither, says Gerhart, did it use the revolt to produce any written propaganda. The only documentary evidence produced in the early weeks following the revolt, was a flyer entitled '*People of South Africa: The African National Congress Calls on you. Amandla Soweto*'.<sup>90</sup> Aside from the usual rhetoric calling on its supporters to unite against the oppressor, the flyer contained no meaningful propaganda exploiting the uprisings. The first coverage of the uprising by its official journal, *Sechaba*, only occurred in the first quarter of 1977.<sup>91</sup>

Even later in 1985, in a report to National Consultative Conference in June, Oliver Tambo lamented the fact that the ANC had not recovered sufficiently to take full advantage of the situation that crystallised from the first events of June 16 1976.

Organisationally, in political and military terms, we were too weak. We had few active ANC units inside the country. We had no military presence to speak of. The communication links between ourselves outside the country and the masses of our

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<sup>88</sup> See Adelaide Tambo. *Preparing for Power: Oliver Tambo Speaks*. 114. Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart. *From Protest to Power: A Documentary History of African Politics, 1882-1990, Vol. 5: Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979* (Pretoria. Unisa Press, 1997). 280

<sup>89</sup> Masinga was one of those backroom strategists of the Soweto Student's Representative Council. His father was an ANC loyalist.

<sup>90</sup> Copy of flyer furnished by Gail Gerhart. In possession of Author. Folder 2.

<sup>91</sup> *Sechaba*, Vol. 11, First Quarter, 1977, "Whites Reaction to Soweto" and "message of the NEC".

people were still too slow to meet the situation such as was posed by the Soweto uprising.”<sup>92</sup>

Without being pretentious it would be necessary to interrogate the reasons for such a blatant omission. I would argue that the movement failed to capitalize on the event for two reasons; firstly the organization, being unprepared for the revolt, was still trying to find a suitable strategy to deal with, or benefit from the outbreak; secondly although Adelaide Tambo might have thought otherwise, I would contend that the movement still lacked the capacity to undertake any significant action inside South Africa.<sup>93</sup> This was understandable given the circumstances which saw political repression reach unprecedented levels. The impact of these conclusions on the historiography of the uprising and of the role of the ANC may perhaps be unsettling, but again this area brings to the fore dilemmas posed firstly by engagement with such material that I generated and located and secondly in relation to the issue of the ANC as an agent of change.

That the ANC was prepared to act and devise pertinent strategies and responses was apparent when in July 1977, the ANC’s National Executive held a meeting to assess the kind of post Soweto strategy that needed to be adopted. In describing its international perception of the movement and its work, the NEC reported its frustrations at being ignored by the UN Security Council. The report proposed that an urgent campaign be launched by its international department for the “eventual exclusive recognition of our organisation” as the sole representative of the oppressed people of South Africa.<sup>94</sup>

While pondering the problems created by the Soweto uprising, a delegation led by Tambo was dispatched by the ANC to Vietnam in October 1978 to learn from the Vietnamese revolutionary experience.<sup>95</sup> As a result, a meeting of the NEC and the Revolutionary Council was held in Luanda from 28 December 1978-January 1979 to assess the report of the group’s visit to Vietnam. What was significant about this visit was

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<sup>92</sup> Sechaba. Vol. 11, First Quarter, 1977.

<sup>93</sup> See Adelaide Tambo. Preparing for Power.

<sup>94</sup> Report on meeting of ANC National Executive Committee, Morogoro 15-24 July 1977. An abridged report presented by Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the ANC. 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. 700.

<sup>95</sup> The delegation, led by Tambo, included Joe Modise-the commander of the Central Operations Headquarters, Joe Slovo-Modise’s deputy, Moses Mabhida-secretary of the Revolutionary Council, Cassius Make-assistant secretary and Thabo Mbeki, a promising young man in the NEC. They met with General Vo Nguyen Giap and representatives of the Vietnamese Workers Party.

how it influenced the ANC and its future strategic initiatives, leading to the crafting of a critical report. The conclusion reached by participants after the meeting was that “the Vietnamese experience reveals certain shortcomings on our part and draws attention to areas of crucial importance which we tended to neglect.”<sup>96</sup> This meant that the ANC was able to confront its shortcomings in a positive manner.

Thereafter the meeting elected a commission of six members which was mandated to scrutinize strategic options and make recommendations in the light of the Vietnamese experience. This group, which came to be known as the *Politico-Military Strategy Commission*, was headed by Tambo and included Thabo Mbeki, Joe Slovo, Moses Mabhida, Joe Gqabi and Joe Modise. After many consultative and discussion sessions held in Luanda, Maputo and Lusaka, the commission produced a final report, drafted by Joe Slovo. The report was known as the “Green Book” named for its green cover. For Joe Slovo, the “Green Book” was the most thorough investigation, from every angle, of what was wrong with the organization. The report comprised three sections. But Part Two was significant because it provided clear evidence of the ANC’s strategic path after the Soweto uprisings, asserting that the “main task is to concentrate on political mobilization and organization so as to build up political revolutionary bases throughout the country’, with armed struggle being considered to be “secondary.”<sup>97</sup> So I would ground my conclusions about the value of the uprising within the context of the compilation of this vital report and of the ANC’s recognition of its failures.

The Soweto uprising represented one of the milestones in the process of developing a relationship with the USA. This will be examined in the following chapters during which I will explore the attitudes and actions of the US state and civil society and how Soweto improved opportunities for the development of the relationship. The uprising also led to the visit to Vietnam which resulted in the movement undertaking a thorough assessment of the current state of the movement and of future paths.

While the state had the benefit of a powerful military and police apparatus, the support of its electorate and the support of western nations concerned with containing the

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<sup>96</sup> “Report of the Politico-Military Strategy Commission to the ANC National Executive Committee. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/green-book.html>.

<sup>97</sup> A thorough analysis of the report has been undertaken by Karis and Gerhart in *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 5*, 304.

“communist threat” as well as trade benefits, the uprising did create a serious crisis for the government. The latter, while never admitting to the existence of any crises, faced for the first time since 1960, a serious challenge to its power. Yet in an address at a public forum in Springs in late August 1976, then Prime Minister John Vorster assured those present that there was really “no crisis” at all and that there was no intention on the state’s part of changing any of the apartheid policies.<sup>98</sup>

Evidence has been provided to indicate that the ANC embarked on many strategies to challenge the South African state. The ANC began with the constitutional struggle, then moved onto the mass based non-violent campaigns, which was followed by the MK strategies of armed struggle. These range of tactics brought the organisation no closer to achieving its goals. Instead as the state began to apply greater pressure which took the forms of ruthless legislation, detentions, bannings and arrests of members of the organisation, the banning of the organisation and the life sentences imposed on its leadership, the ANC adopted yet another strategy. It attempted to secure for itself international political status, and in so doing hoped to be able to challenge the South African state on a diplomatic and political front. Sources within the organisation were optimistic about the effectiveness of this strategy.

### ***International Developments in the 1960s***

Looking back to 1960, having anticipated the government’s restrictions, the ANC sent out roving diplomats to secure international support for the ANC. Oliver Tambo, the Deputy President of the ANC, slipped out of the country in that year and went on to establish the organisation’s first overseas offices in London, Cairo, Algiers and Dar es Salaam. External missions, as these offices abroad came to be called, were mandated with the following functions; to make provision for the training of military cadres, to devise strategies for the infiltration of South Africa, to mobilize political support in the rest of the world and fundraising. In effect, the external missions were responsible for the support of the internal operations. During his visit to the USA, Tambo in his address at Smith College, reiterated this view that the external officials were responsible for the

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<sup>98</sup> Reported by South African Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in Foreign Affairs Files, 1/33/3, Secretary to Ambassador, September 1976.

support services of the internal forces and that this included the support for the ANC's military operations inside South Africa. In 1964, the ANC headquarters were shifted from London to Morogoro, in Tanzania. Offices were also opened in New Delhi, Lusaka and Morocco. Informal representation was also established in the Scandinavian countries.<sup>99</sup>

Addressing the UN Special Committee on 8 October 1963, Tambo spoke about his assignment. He explained:

In 1958, the people of South Africa had become convinced that if nothing was done to bring pressure to bear on the South African government in addition to their own effort, they would be compelled as a last resort to rebel against tyranny and oppression.<sup>100</sup>

This new tactic was therefore meant to continue with ANC attempts to apply pressure on South Africa. Tambo was appointed to head the external structure. In weighing up the evidence, it would be simple to argue that Tambo's ability to control the operations of this structure was limited. But in order to be realistic in the interpretation of the evidence it would be necessary to point out that in view of the difficulties of communication, each office followed its own guidelines and was left on their own to implement ANC programmes. A study of the records of the mission offices revealed that while in later years, a more structured system of communication was established between the Headquarters in Tanzania and the other offices, in this early period there was no coordinated system of communication. While offices remained linked through the exchange of letters, memoranda and cables, it was a very haphazard arrangement.<sup>101</sup> Hence I would be justified in refraining from reaching conclusions about the value of this new strategy at this stage.

For the conduct of their international activities, in the ANC developed an organisation together with the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), South African Indian Congress (SAIC), South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and South West African

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<sup>99</sup> See Report by Mohammed Tikly. "The History of ANC Missions". ANC Archives, Report Commissioned by Archives Committee. 2006. As a member of the ANC Archives Committee, I was familiar with this document presented by Mr. Tikly. Hence when writing this chapter I requested a copy of the document from him as well as his permission to cite it. He subsequently let me have a copy as well as the necessary permission. In author's possession. Folder 3. Another good source on the ANC mission is Roger Pfister. "Gateway to International Success: The Diplomacy of the African National Congress in Africa 1960-1994". *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 41.1.

<sup>100</sup> Cited in Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict". 143.

<sup>101</sup> Tikly Report.

National Union (SWANU). The United Front, as the organisation came to be known, was officially launched in London in May 1960. The Front had a twofold purpose; to assist the ANC and PAC to work together internationally and to assist both organisations to combine their efforts. This was an agreement for informal cooperation in exile, with the common understanding of the need to eliminate white rule in South Africa.<sup>102</sup>

The United Front enjoyed some degree of success and it received the recognition and support of organisations such as the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA). In November 1960, Tambo was granted permission to appear before the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations where he called for the transfer of South West Africa to UN control.<sup>103</sup> Further success came in the form of boycotts by some European nations of South African goods and in the termination of Tanganyikan contracts with South Africa. The most successful campaign of the United Front could be discerned from its attempts to have South Africa excluded from the Commonwealth. The lobbying for the country's exclusion began at the conference of Independent African States. This was a group of countries who were concerned about issues such as African freedom, racism and segregation. After the South African government announced the referendum relating to the country becoming a republic, the United Front intensified its campaign for exclusion. Chief Luthuli sent telegrams to every commonwealth Prime Minister. Together with this strategy, the United Front representatives visited every Commonwealth country for political discussions. With the strong support of Julius Nyerere, victory for the front was assured. In March 1961, South Africa was excluded from the Commonwealth. But given the internal squabbling and dissension, the United Front was dissolved on March 15 1962.<sup>104</sup>

### ***ANC Strategic and Organisational Reassessments: The Lobatsi and Morogoro Meetings***

But looking at events back home in South Africa, the actions of the South African police began to take their toll on the internal leadership of the ANC. This resulted in the troubled organisation meeting at Lobatsi in Bechuanaland in 1962, after Mandela was

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<sup>102</sup> Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal conflict." 168.

<sup>103</sup> Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal conflict." 169.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Peter Pyise, activist who was present at the meeting. 12 September 2001. Folder 4.

arrested, to undertake an assessment of their worsening situation. While my argument has been that that with the banning of the ANC, the movement was poised to enter the international arena, it was this meeting that formalised such a necessary entry. Hence for this study, the Bechuanaland meeting marked a milestone or turning point in the process of developing an international policy. This was the first ANC conference since the banning of the ANC. Attending the meeting were a number of ANC leaders from South Africa as well as leaders from the external missions. While many scholars have pointed to the secret nature of the meeting, through an interview held with Peter Peyise, I have been able to confirm that the meeting was secret, but that it focused on ANC strategy. The 'historic' nature of this meeting was conveyed through the following statement issued by the NEC of the movement in April 1963.

Our mass political line of action is inspired by our Historic National Conference held in Lobatsi in November last year. The Conference was significant, not only because it was fully representative of all the regions of the ANC..., but also because of the militancy that characterised it. The impressive attendance of the youth on an unprecedented scale.... It gave its fullest attention to the strategy and tactics to be used in the new situation. It is a guide to our members of the political line of action to be followed.<sup>105</sup>

According to Pyise, several issues that emerged in this statement had already been debated and approved at Lobatsi. So although the meeting was highly secretive, the NEC statement of a year later provided evidence of the discussions that took place at that meeting. The statement reaffirmed the ANC strategy of mass political action, and went further to explain that such action was vital for the effective operation of military action. The statement called for a change in "the character of our activities," which was necessary to keep abreast of the "changes in the national situation." International pressure or the role of the international community was considered a vital link in that strategic chain which included mass political action and military action. Attention was drawn to the role of the External Mission in accomplishing this ideal. The meeting noted, with much optimism, "that internal and external situations favour us," and that the external mission has "done magnificent work in exposing the immoral policies of the Nationalists abroad and in enlisting the sympathy of the democratic world."<sup>106</sup> To illustrate the success of the external Mission, reference was made to events such as the

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<sup>105</sup> NEC Statement. April 6 1963. (ANC Archives, NEC Reports, ANC Headquarters).

<sup>106</sup> Karis and Carter. *From Protest to Challenge 1952-1964*, Vol. 3. 748.

resolutions at the UN to impose sanctions on South Africa and the PAFMECA Conference (Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa). According to Karis and Carter, this statement was significant for other reasons as well. This was the first time that an NEC statement linked the ANC with Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Also, it must be remembered that MK's strategy of military action was directed at provoking international action against the South African economy.<sup>107</sup>

In the final analysis, the Lobatsi meeting was a vital step in formally launching the ANC onto the international stage as delegates laid out the broad outline of ANC foreign policy in exile by approving the military actions of MK and the policy of seeking foreign support through diplomacy. The prognosis was now clear. The ANC had suffered a blizzard of disappointments in the implementation of its resistance strategies against the state. It therefore again confronted its inadequacies by considering the need for a major strategic and organisational reassessment. To accomplish this, a major conference was held in Morogoro in 1969. In this regards, I recall my time at the ANC Headquarters in Johannesburg during the 1990s when Morogoro always acted as a reference point for discussions of strategy. Now I understand now why this was so. One of the most noteworthy outcomes of the conference was the development of the historic document entitled *Strategy and Tactics*, which resulted from a frank assessment of priorities for the struggle. The conference was also convened to address ambiguities that became apparent after the adoption of the Lusaka Manifesto.<sup>108</sup>

The dilemmas that faced the ANC were encapsulated in a memorandum submitted by Ben Turok, a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP), then residing in Dar-es Salaam. This document is perhaps the most candid piece of evidence detailing the extent of the problems that faced the ANC during the first decade of exile. In this document, Turok complained that "No one in the movement can be content with the present situation, all must be aware of a deep going malaise such as we have never

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<sup>107</sup> Karis and Carter. *From Protest to Challenge 1952-1964*. 748.

<sup>108</sup> This document was drafted by Tanzanian and Zambian leaders without consulting the ANC or PAC, and was adopted by the Heads of 14 independent East and Central African states on April 1969. The document was conciliatory towards the apartheid state and seemed to demonstrate that these African countries did not take the liberation movement seriously. The document is analysed at length in Chapter Three.

known before”. After focusing on among others, the ‘failure of the leadership’, the ‘political problems’, the ‘style of work’, ‘the treatment meted out to our military comrades’, he concluded that for the struggle to achieve any degree of success it was “up to those of us who are now lying relatively immobilised in exile to take up with new resolve the fight to free South Africa.”<sup>109</sup>

While many documents were produced and circulated in advance of the conference in order to allow for productive discussions, of all the documents produced for the conference, it was the “Strategies and Tactics’ document, drafted by Joe Slovo, that represented the most bold attempt by the ANC, to undertake an in-depth analysis of its role in the struggle for liberation.<sup>110</sup> Given the brief and value of this meeting, even *Sechaba*, the official publication of the ANC which was directed at members and sympathisers, afforded the conference much coverage. It reported that the conference “studied the enemy, his strength and weaknesses...it examined the struggle, its record and achievements and its targets for the future. What I found pertinent, especially for **this** study was the resolution relating to the importance of the international arena. This being that it was resolved “to intensify the international campaign against South Africa’s apartheid regime because this helps to weaken the enemy.”<sup>111</sup>

While I may be accused of over-emphasising the merit of this meeting, it can be seen that the resolutions of the conference marked a significant transformation in ANC foreign policy, indicating that the liberation movement had integrated itself fully within the framework of the global ideological struggle of the cold war, taking up both the rhetoric and the thrust of the rivalry of the super powers. This was indicative of the ANC’s attempt to move in a more organised manner from the margins of the international stage to the centre stage, while at the same time firming my argument about the ANC as an agency of change.

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<sup>109</sup> Memorandum by Ben Turok, one of the intellectuals of the movement to the ANC’s Morogoro Preparatory Committee. April 1969. Morogoro Conference.  
<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/conf/turok6904.html>.

<sup>110</sup> *Unity in Action: A Short History of the African National Congress (South Africa) 1912-1982*. (London. African National Congress). 59. This was a publication of the ANC’s London Office. For a detailed report on the Morogoro Conference, see also <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/conf/turok6904.html>. Karis and Gerhart. *Nadir and Resurgence*. 387.

<sup>111</sup> *Sechaba*. Vol. 4. No. 1. Jan. 1970. 5.

### ***The Development of a Foreign Policy Document***

The movement went even further in pursuing its international agenda. As a result of the Morogoro meeting a sub-committee was appointed to deal with the issue of foreign policy. The draft document, produced by this committee, and which was entitled “Our Foreign Policy Objectives,” provided lucid evidence on the ANC’s conceptual views and framework for a foreign policy. The origins of this document are interesting in that it provides evidence of challenges in locating or obtaining data on the period under review. This document was furnished by an anonymous donor who obtained a copy from the Ruth First papers at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London in 1987. It has been difficult to establish the author of the document, but the donor had indicated that this could have been drafted by Ruth First as a note was found with a request from O. R. Tambo for her to draft such a document. A source has confirmed that First was often called upon by Tambo to draft policy documents, while other sources have confirmed having had access to this document while at the ANC London Mission, when it was sent there from Lusaka for comment and input.<sup>112</sup>

In its preamble, the document drew attention to an urgent need for a sharply defined and directed foreign policy. Briefly summarised, it focused on relationships with four different categories of countries: with ‘firm friends;’ with countries which are not ‘firm friends’, but generally support the struggle against apartheid; with hostile countries which have powerful opposition forces but which are supportive of the ANC; and finally hostile countries which have no powerful groups that are supportive of the ANC.

It called for the greater consolidation of its position with firm friends such as the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria and other Socialist countries in Eastern Europe., with Cuba in South America and India in Asia. Its objective in dealing with these friendly countries was to ensure full support for the struggle for as long as it took to attain freedom. Turning to its friends in Africa, specific reference was made to Algeria, the United Arab Republic (UAR), Zambia and Tanzania. In attempting to secure support from these sources, the document cautioned on the need to ensure “that we are

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<sup>112</sup> “Our Foreign Policy Objectives”. June 1969. Anonymous Donor. Document in possession of author. Folder 2. As this was a confidential document which was considered contentious, sources confirming its existence or its authorship were reluctant to be named. But one was based in the Lusaka office while the other was based in the London office.

not treated merely as one of the liberation movements that must be supported only on the grounds of Organisation of African Unity (OAU) resolutions. By support, we must mean simply support for the ANC and its struggle.” In regards to its ‘firm friends in Europe, reference was made to Sweden and the Scandinavian countries.

So much for the different categories and the firm friends. But what becomes crucial to my work was the location of the USA within this structure. Category D, or the last category, was reserved for countries such as Britain, the USA and Germany. However, here it was stressed that while the USA was ‘hostile’ to the movement, there was in existence the African-American movement which was able to provide the ANC with new opportunities to influence US opinion in government. This distinction must be viewed as an important one that would continue to play itself out in the years leading to South Africa’s freedom in 1994, as the African–American movement came to form the base of the mass anti-apartheid US lobby. Mobilising support in this ‘hostile’ country was a pertinent concern raised in the document. But not only did it raise this concern, the document even proceeded to outline its strategy to “influence the press and public opinion by a powerful campaign against apartheid.” It went on to explain that while the **focus** “need not be on the armed struggle, but on the need to prevent intervention on the side of apartheid.” What is significant is that it realised that “we cannot hope for more than contact at some levels” with the government, public organisations and press. But support could be sought from students and left wing groups.<sup>113</sup>

From 1969-1970, this draft foreign policy document was circulated to mission offices for further input before it could be finalised. That the document generated much discussion is clear from the responses received from the different mission offices. A study of all the responses yielded the following broad agreement on areas that required amendment or inclusion. There was a call for a two pronged tactic against “hostile” countries such as the USA. This strategy should seek to build a strong movement of political commitment to the ANC, through the raising of practical aid for the struggle, and encouraging confrontation with the collaborators. Secondly it should seek to influence broad opinion makers to question government policy toward South Africa. To implement this dual strategy, it was considered necessary to initiate a programme of visits by key ANC

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<sup>113</sup> “Our Foreign Policy Objectives.”

representatives to key countries with the intention firstly, of establishing the necessary mechanisms for continued contact, and secondly, for an outlet for publicity material and thirdly for the purpose of isolating the apartheid state.<sup>114</sup>

The London Mission called for a thorough review of the mechanisms that the ANC had in place for its international work. There was a need, they argued, for a structure in which “vertical and horizontal relationships and responsibilities” are clearly defined. This call emanated from the Mission’s concern over the problems associated with ANC’s international policy and over the failure of the Congress Group to effectively undertake the tasks allocated to it. This group, which comprised 11 members, was set up by the ANC to initiate and coordinate international solidarity work in Western Europe, the United Kingdom and the USA. But according to the London Mission document, the group was afflicted by many problems such as poor attendance at meetings, its informal status, its inability to reach decisions and its lack of effective contact with the rest of the ANC structures.

At a meeting of the Foreign Policy sub-committee held on 15 April 1970 these issues, comments and concerns were scrutinised and the final recommendation from the group was for the ANC to “seek to steer a course in foreign policy, so as to commit itself to issues directly confronting the South African liberation movement.”<sup>115</sup> In spite of evidence to the contrary, I have succeeded in arguing that in spite of the hostile domestic and international environment within which the ANC found itself, by the late 1960s the ANC was no longer guilty of haphazard applications of policy. It began to focus on strategic planning and had the most organised revolutionary operations in Southern Africa. The ANC’s confidence in the effectiveness of such an approach, guided it through the next decade as it continued to fight the apartheid state while working to build a relationship with the United States of America.

On the domestic scene, as was usually the case, state action determined and was determined by the activities and strategies of the liberation movement. Hence within the National Party camp conflicts began to grow regarding the future direction of state policy in respect of “separate development.” In spite of threats of international isolation, party

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<sup>114</sup> “Our Foreign Policy Objectives.”

<sup>115</sup> Minutes of *Foreign Policy Sub-Committee Meeting*, July 1970. Anonymous Donor.

hardliners challenged any attempts to placate liberal and foreign bodies while party pragmatists feared the looming effects of international isolation that could eventually lead to a collapse of the economy.<sup>116</sup> The latter acknowledged the existence of disastrous publicity generated by the uprising – the kind of publicity that seriously dented the image of South Africa abroad. The solution to this dilemma, for this group, was for the introduction of reforms, which could repair South Africa’s image internationally as well as compose black rage.

Given this call, the dilemma facing the National Party was how to introduce ‘reforms’ without alienating the conservative element while at the same time placating blacks enough to seduce them into project a more positive image of South Africa abroad. This was clearly a staggering task and in the short term the government emerged relatively unscathed from the domestic uprisings. There was no reform to the calamitous school system and township conditions remained the same. ‘Concessions’ that were offered were, in reality, no concession at all. Urban Bantu Councils were scrapped, only to be replaced with like bodies called Community Councils. Although rent hikes were postponed in Soweto, they were eventually imposed. The term “separate development” was replaced with the term “plural development.” The department of Bantu Affairs changed its name to Department of Plural Relations. Despite the role played by the townships in the uprising, life in the townships remained much the same after June 1979. These so-called reforms, which were consistent with past apartheid policy, were passed off as being done in the spirit of democracy. That the revolt made no difference to the state’s resolve never to respond to demands for that truly democratic principle of one-man-one vote in South Africa was evident as it moved to even harsher methods of crushing resistance, of new strategies to divide the majority as well as of new strategies to improve its image abroad. This endless spiral continued well into the 1990s during the dying days of apartheid when the writing was on the wall-that majority rule for South Africa was now inevitable.

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<sup>116</sup> This group included members of the Afrikaner business community, academics and media.

## **Conclusion**

By examining the early attempts of the ANC to become involved in the international arena, this chapter has raised important issues relating to the ANC's efforts which will be explored further in following chapters. The ANC was not very visible internationally in the early years, thus allowing me to conclude that up to the 'Treason Trials', the ANC had no foreign policy, relying instead on informal networks and individuals. The situation was aggravated by relentless state persecution as evidenced through the many trials-all which presented a hopeless scenario for the ANC. While those events such as the Treason Trial may have helped to somewhat raise the profile of the ANC in the USA, they did nothing to endear the latter to their cause.

Refusing to cave in to this situation, the movement reacted in a positive manner by assessing and reorganising its priorities at Lobatsi, and then at Morogoro. The result of these assessments proved critical for my study because they provided the catalyst for the birth of a formal foreign policy as demonstrated by the crafting of the historic *Foreign Policy Objectives* in 1969. While a policy was set and the ANC was poised to take on the global players, in the case of the US State, it faced an arduous endeavour in gaining recognition from quarter. This will become clear when one looks at USA policy, through the different administrations beginning with John F. Kennedy in the following Chapter. Hostility, edged on by cold war developments was the order of the day.

Having said this, I would like to conclude this chapter with the following observations. While the ANC may have had no foreign relations or policy as such before this, it had **not** been guilty of any major international relations errors which may have given cause for international enmity towards the movement. The ANC was presented with a blank canvas upon which to develop its relations with the USA, this in spite of the hostility it was expected to confront. Having suffered a blizzard of disappointments in its attempts to secure freedom, it would be argued that the blank canvas provided a fortuitous opportunity to make strategic and informed choices. Whether this was done will be interrogated in the following chapters. The freedom to form loose bonds became a certainty. Although the ANC was not tied to a Matthews or Plaatje's policy, it was offered the flexibility and opportunity to be more creative and to, for instance, take up the racists and human rights areas in the USA. But it also had as its guidelines, early

contacts, institutional or personal, and prior USA State reactions in relation to global events-all of which played a significant role in driving organisational foreign policy initiatives with the USA State and Civil Society. Having said this, the following chapters will continue to engage these areas with a view to illustrating that in spite of the odds, the ANC's work was dominated by moves which ensured that an effective foreign relationship with the USA was secured.

## *Chapter Two*

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### **GLOBAL STAKES: USA POLICY TOWARDS THE ANC FROM KENNEDY TO KISSINGER**

#### **Abstract**

*It is my purpose to briefly look at the views of the different US administrations from the time of Kennedy to Kissinger under the Nixon era towards South Africa, towards the freedom struggle and towards the African National Congress within the context of apartheid, arguing that these administrations were, as Christopher Coker pointed out, “trapped by the ambiguities of their own position”<sup>1</sup> This study of the administrations of 1960-1976 takes account of the context of global developments such as the cold war as these developments guided the USA’s crafting of international policies. This context is critical in providing an understanding of the difficulties the ANC encountered in trying to secure the serious interest of the US State. I will prove that it was a formidable endeavour which only achieved some success later during the Ronald Reagan administration as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four. An examination of how the ANC positioned its relationship with the Soviet Union will comprise an element of this study. Although the USA and the Soviet Union were clashing head on during the 1970s and 1980s the ANC still continued in its attempts to develop links with the USA. The reasons for this will be interrogated. Even the historiography of this area is complex as they fit into three categories: scholars who have looked at the relationship within the cold war lens; those who looked at international policy in the region as apologists for the apartheid state; the third group which moved away from the traditional approach to take into account the different constituencies influencing the relationship. While this chapter does not attempt a study of USA Policy per se, this overview is necessary in demonstrating the effectiveness of civil society in changing USA Policy towards liberations movements such as the ANC. This is vital in promoting my arguments that events such as those at Sharpeville did not aid the ANC*

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Coker. The United States and South Africa 1968-1985: Constructive Engagement and its Critics (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), 8. As this work does not aim to undertake a study of all US administrations, and given the constraints of space, it will not be possible to examine US policy towards African and Freedom movements such as the ANC. I have instead adopted the strategy of focusing on what I consider to be key administrations to my work and they include the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon-Ford, Carter and Reagan years. Carter’s and Reagan’s policies will merit greater scrutiny in the next Chapter.

*cause in relation to shifting USA policy in favour of the liberation movement as the USA still appeared reluctant to take a firm hand with Pretoria. Aside from anticipated effects in the USA, Sharpeville did not even move Third World countries as evidenced by the meeting of Non-Aligned states held in Belgrade just after the event, where the latter did not even merit mention. But while the ANC experienced challenges in the USA until the Reagan era, by 1979 opportunities for global support began to open up rapidly. In that year, the Front Line States, liberation movements such as the ANC and the Non-Aligned Movement took a common position on the conflicts in Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa, implying that the ANC could expect meaningful support, for the first time from that quarter. Outside of the African continent, international non-governmental organisations such the International Defence and Aid Fund(IDAF), International University Exchange Fund(IUEF), the International Commission of Jurists(ICJ) and the World Council of Churches(WCC), all crafted serious projects of support for liberation organisations such as the ANC. These projects were inspired by the work of activist groups in countries such as Great Britain, Australia, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, France and Belgium.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, ultimately Coker's interpretation of successive US administrations' reluctance to support the ANC's efforts is therefore appropriate.*

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Developments in the USA in the 1980s proved favourable for the ANC in its attempts to develop a relationship with, and attract the attention of the presiding administration. In 1986 the Congress of the United States passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA), against President Reagan's veto. In early 1987 US Secretary of State, George Shultz officially received Oliver Tambo in Washington and in the latter part of 1989 the ANC was able to open an office in Washington.<sup>3</sup> Yet only a year later the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela released from prison and four years later South Africans won the freedom for which they had fought for almost five decades. This building a relationship with the US Government lasted for as long as the ANC's struggle with the apartheid state. I would go further to argue that while this was the case, South Africa's

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the work of these organisations see George Shepherd Jr. Anti-Apartheid: Transnational Conflict and Western Policy in the Liberation of South Africa (Westport. Greenwood Press, 1977). 125.

<sup>3</sup> In 1974, the ANC was granted Observer Status at the United Nations and hence had an office in New York from 1974-1994. See Roger Pfister. 'Gateway to International Victory: The Diplomacy of the African National Congress, 1960-1994,' in Journal of Modern African Studies. 41:1, (2003), 57.

leading liberation organisation persevered in its efforts and though it realised success only in the final years of the struggle, it paved the way for a diplomatic relationship in a post apartheid society. Therefore this chapter again strengthens the theme of the ANC as an agency of change.

The thinking of the different USA administrations from Kennedy to Nixon will be interrogated as a critical component in appreciating the daunting nature of the ANC's task. Given earlier observations regarding what could be perceived as positive developments for the ANC only in the late 1980s and during the Reagan era when the ANC saw some relief in sight, it could well be argued that the ANC enjoyed no tangible success until the last years before freedom. But instead what evidence will demonstrate is that this was not the case. This is so because the ANC had succeeded in mobilising civil society in the USA, which in turn exerted the necessary pressure on Washington resulting in the international isolation of the apartheid state. Hence a review of the different administrations and the political dynamics that shaped the policies of those administrations reinforces this perception.

The reader may be tempted to criticise the strategy of examining the thinking of the many administrations, this given my conclusion that the successive US state administrations studied in this work were indecisive and their policies towards African and liberation movements such as the ANC lacked vision and direction. If anything many Presidents adopted a strategy of supporting and implementing policies that reflected low political costs for Washington. Hence in most cases, and more specifically in the case of John F. Kennedy, they preferred to hedge their bets. In this regard, I find it comfortable to align my conclusions with views of scholars such as Richard Bissell and Christian de Vos.

Bissell appropriately pointed to the USA's "ability to pursue contradictory policies simultaneously" while de Vos who specifically focused on the Kennedy years and the ANC, attempted rather successfully to dispel the prevailing view that John F. Kennedy's (JFK) presidency "has been that of a liberal administration unable to take a stronger stand on apartheid", demonstrating instead that his administration "chose to

align itself with the Nationalist party's depiction of apartheid as a policy in the 'interest of both sides.'"<sup>4</sup>

The reader may well advise on a generic conclusion which could dismiss an overview of the different administrations. After all this study is not focused on USA foreign policy and there is a notable historiography on this area. While consideration was given to such a model in the structuring of this chapter, such a step may have resulted in simultaneous scholarly accusation of a degree of weakness on my part since the South African dilemmas had to compete with global challenges such as the Cold War. For the ANC, attempts to secure support from the USA was certainly daunting especially since the USA's international policy informed its Africa policy. This in turn influenced its relations with and support of the apartheid regime and ultimately its views of liberation organisations such as the ANC. It is therefore vital to examine all these dynamics within the Cold War lens. Hence it will be necessary to explore briefly the actions and decisions of each administration within this context. In this regard, what is also significant is that the ANC was able to leverage its relationship with the Soviet Union, a key protagonist of the Cold War, in a manner that allowed it to draw the attention of the USA to its activities. But again it will be demonstrated that this relationship could only be leveraged until the early 1980s for by the later years of that period cracks began to emerge in ANC's relationship with the Soviet Union-and this was also tied to global developments. The latter argument will be explored in Chapter Four.

Harking back to the formidable nature of the task that confronted the African liberation movement in its attempts to construct a relationship with what was generally considered to be the most powerful global player, can be further demonstrated when trying to compare its attempts in trying to implement similar strategies with countries in Western Europe. This comparison grows out of the manner in which the civil rights struggle, domestic African American politics and strong anti-communist sentiment influenced American perceptions of the struggle in South Africa. In fact it was far easier for the ANC to operate in countries like the United Kingdom where communism was not a

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<sup>4</sup> See Richard E. Bissell. "How Strategic is South Africa?" in Richard E. Bissell and Chester A. Crocker (eds). *South Africa into the 1980s*. (Boulder, Westview, 1980). 209-231, quoted in Larry W. Bowman. "The Strategic Importance of South Africa to the United States: An Appraisal and Policy Analysis". This was an essay prepared for the Study Commission on US Policy Toward Southern Africa and presented to them in October 1980. Christian M. De Vos. "Balancing Acts: John Kennedy, The Cold War and the African National Congress." In *Politikon* (May 2005), 32(1).

decisive factor in determining whether to support organisations like the ANC. The existence of pro-communist movements in developing countries like India, Brazil and countries in Africa as well as those such as the England and the Scandinavian group made this aspect of the ANC's history not as important as it was in the USA.

Hence the ANC's main and most effective office of the Foreign Missions was established in London in the 1960s, thus facilitating the growth of the largest and most powerful solidarity movements such as the British and Irish anti-apartheid movements, which leveraged support for the international isolation of the apartheid state.<sup>5</sup> The same can be said of the Nordic countries like Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. But a discussion of these various international attempts does not fall within the scope of my study.<sup>6</sup> In fact during the 1950s, the civil rights movement, like the American labour movement, was purged of its communist members. So as a means of promoting civil rights at home, many African-Americans realised the need to illustrate their patriotism towards their country by supporting its anti-communist foreign policy abroad.

### ***Africa in Relation to the USA's International Policy***

Whatever the importance of my sentiments as indications of the nature of the ANC's task at hand, it still raises questions about how the USA was able to translate state perceptions of Africa into official policy. While the USA may have emerged as the guiding force of the imperial powers after World War Two, as pointed out by those like Bernard Magubane and Walter LaFeber, evidence supports the point of view that it was

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<sup>5</sup> For Mohamed Tikly, who wrote up a Study of the ANC's External Wing for the Party, the United Kingdom was important for a number of reasons, the obvious being that it had strong diplomatic and trade ties with South Africa. Organisations like the International Defence and Aid Fund whose sole focus was to support the freedom struggles of Southern Africa were operational in the UK from 1966-1992. Mohammed Tikly. 'The ANC External Mission'. Paper commissioned by the ANC Archives Committee in 2006. Tikly was a former Principal of the Solomon Mahlangu College in Tanzania, set up by the ANC to provide an education for those fleeing South Africa after the Soweto Uprisings. He is also a member of the ANC's Archives Committee since 1993. For the work of IDAF see Horst Kleinsmidt. "The Role of the Defence and Aid Fund." Presented at the conference on *International Anti-Apartheid Movements in South Africa's freedom Struggle: Lessons for Today*. University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 10-13 October 2004. Kleinsmidt was the Executive Director of IDAF from 1983-1992. See also Scott Thomas. The Diplomacy of Liberation: The Foreign Relations of the African National Congress Since 1960 (New York. IB Taurus Publishers). 174, who also argued that the UK became an area of focus for the ANC's propaganda activities. He also pointed out that this country was the first Western country which provided refuge for the ANC activists since 1960.

<sup>6</sup> For Nordic Solidarity and more specifically Swedish support for national liberation in Southern Africa, see Tor Sellstrom. Sweden and National Liberation and South Africa. Vols. 1 and 11 (Uppsala. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999) and Tor Sellstrom(ed.). Liberation in Southern Africa: Regional and Swedish Voices (Uppsala. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002).

not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that Washington began to be drawn more directly, but slowly, into the colonial affairs in Africa and Asia. From the time of President Richard Nixon's visit in 1957, American diplomatic activity began to grow in the African continent, culminating in the rise to power of Moboto Sese Seko through the efforts of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>7</sup> But none of this was significant enough to really help edge the US state any closer to the ANC cause until the 1980s. La Feber's study of America and Russia's relations against the backdrop of the Cold War provided a new perspective of what became seen as 'not the most satisfying chapter in American Diplomatic History' Also from evidence provided by Chester Crocker in his many speeches, articles and policy documents, it was clear that only by the 1970s that American interest specifically in Africa was "rudely awakened" and caused Washington to "shift gears" towards a more 'active' diplomacy with African nations. To articulate it simply, what this shows is that up to the 1970s the African continent did not merit any serious consideration in American policy.

Where Africa stood in relation to state policy in the pre-1970s was also well documented by Senator J. H. Grobler, who writing as early as 1957 in his book *Africa's Destiny*, engaged in an analysis of the importance of Africa in any future world war and explained that in the event of such a war, "the clash will presumably be between Western democracies and the Communist Constellation" and Africa will remain to effect the balance of power in the future world.<sup>8</sup> The scenario presented by his analysis was the following; should Europe fall threat to an 'atomic blitzkrieg' by Russia and her satellites, the Western world will be compelled to turn to Africa, more precisely Southern Africa to effect a counter offensive against communist dominated regions of Europe, the Middle East and even possibly North Africa.<sup>9</sup> Another interesting analysis offered by the Senator was the existence of the close link between American domestic colour policy and its foreign policy. He acknowledged that the US state "realizes only too well that it can hardly make any favourable impression on countries like India and Egypt unless its

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<sup>7</sup> The purpose of this visit was to attend Ghana's independence celebrations. See Thomas Karis. "United States Policy toward South Africa," in Gwendolen M. Carter and Patrick O' Meara (eds.), *Southern Africa: The Continuing Crisis* (Bloomington. Indiana University Press, 1979) 320. See also Bernard M. Magubane. 'United States/South Africa Relations'. 1988. Unpublished paper furnished by Professor Magubane to the author. See also Walter LaFaber. *America, Russia and the Cold War 1945-1990* (New York. McGraw Hill, 1991) and Chester Crocker. "A US Policy for the 80s." This appeared as part of the *Occasional Paper* series of the South African Institute of International Affairs. May 1981.

<sup>8</sup> J. H. Grobler. *Africa's Destiny* (Johannesburg. Book of the Month Club, 1958). 11.

<sup>9</sup> Grobler. *Africa's Destiny*. 41.

colour policy is in conformity with the tenet of the new slogan of ‘fundamental human rights.’”<sup>10</sup>

But whatever the scholarly perceptions and arguments regarding the US state and its thinking on the African continent and South Africa, given its track record in the context of the Cold War, it was clear that when it did take the decision to become actively involved, as will be argued later on in this chapter and in Chapter Four, it would settle for nothing less than being the dominant imperial power on the continent. Also given evidence from 1914, which includes looking at the USA’s early relationships and contacts with South Africa, its officials and South African issues, especially at the UN, was a good indication of the direction any future relationship with the latter would take.<sup>11</sup>

Such support did not emerge out of a vacuum, but was guided by dynamics such as human rights and democracy and the Cold War.

This it will be argued was clearly discerned in the 1940s, when two threats confronted the USA and hence served to strengthen the USA/SA relationship-much to the detriment of the African National Congress and its attempts to secure support against the apartheid state. Firstly the Cold War entered a perilous phase and at the same time, but on another level, there was a call for human rights and democracy.<sup>12</sup> The solution to such threats, as perceived by both countries, was to focus on the communist scare. In his insightful study which was devoted to investigating the relationship of Africans-Americans to the African continent, Magubane focused on the related issues and arguments which informed the relationship which in turn was shaped by the whole concept of what constituted the black identity. These issues included factors such as the stereotypes of Africa, racism,

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<sup>10</sup> Grobler. *Africa’s Destiny*. 24

<sup>11</sup> Since the conclusion of the first World War the relationship between the USA and South Africa grew. This was demonstrated by the relationship between Jan Smuts and Woodrow Wilson. Recommendations by Wilson to the USA about Smuts and his role in the League of Nations enhanced the image of the South African Prime Minister. This relationship was strengthened during the Second World War when Smuts played a significant role in drafting the United Nations Organisation Charter. After the War, by the time the Nationalists assumed power in SA, the relationship strengthened with South Africa participating in the Berlin Airlift in 1950. See Nelson. ‘Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict’. 104 and Magubane. ‘USA/SA Relations’. Even during the infant stages of the UN when India together with the newly independent countries, proposed a resolution requesting that the Union of South Africa provide a report on its treatment of Indians in that country, the US vote on this issue stood at a distinct ‘NO’. On a further proposal for negotiations on this issue, the US joined South Africa with another ‘NO’ vote. On this issue see Magubane. *The Ties that Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa* (New Jersey. African World Press, 1987). 213.

<sup>12</sup>1948 witnessed the Soviet annexation of Czechoslovakia and the Berlin Blockade. See also Chris Alden. “From Liberation Movement to Political Party: ANC Foreign Policy in Transition,” in *The South African Journal of International Affairs*. Vol.1. No. 1 (Spring 1993), 69.

Pan Africanism, African ‘nationhood’ and the role of movements such as the “Back to Africa” Movement. According to Magubane, the “capitalist mentality” saw no other route to defusing the “challenge to its exploitations and oppressive politics: it knows only one answer-anti-communism.”<sup>13</sup> To emphasise this point, he pointed to the views of those like Paul Robeson of the Council on African Affairs, who “lamented the fact that as in South Africa, where the notorious Suppression of Communism Act is used to attack the liberation movement, the enemies of Negro freedom in our country have accused the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) of being a ‘subversive conspiracy’ and the organization has been outlawed in Louisiana, Texas and Alabama, and legally restricted in Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina and Mississippi.” He went even further to allude to “City ordinances,” such as those in Little Rock, that were also used for this purpose.<sup>14</sup>

In view of such developments, it was not surprising to find evidence demonstrating how the Nationalists, who, when they were elected to power in 1948, adopted strategy linked to international developments. This was apparent not only in their use of only racial segregation together with anti-communism as their campaign platforms, but also during the trials of South African activists as demonstrated in an earlier chapter. One has to understand that these officials really expected such platforms to ingratiate them to Washington. Also nothing frightened the white racist and capitalists more than the horrifying prospect of a “communist organized revolution of the vast Bantu Population.”<sup>15</sup>

These circumstances and perceptions must be borne in mind when examining areas such as Nelson Mandela’s underground activities which were communicated to the South African intelligence services by the US Central Intelligence Agency and which has already been examined in an earlier chapter. That action marked the beginning of what many historians and political analysts have termed the ‘unholy alliance’ between the United States and South Africa to undermine the work of liberation movements such as the African National Congress.

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<sup>13</sup> Magubane. *Ties That Bind*. 215.

<sup>14</sup> Magubane. *Ties That Bind*. 216.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence James. *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London. Abacus Press, 1996), 536. See also Gary Alligam. *Verwoerd: The End* (Johannesburg. Purnell and Sons, 1961), who, in his study addressed the fear of the “Red-behind-the-black” tactic.

At this point in the study it would be necessary to interrogate the extent to which the ANC's relationship with the USSR may have shaped Washington's attitude and actions towards the liberation movement. A useful source **for** this relationship between the ANC and the USSR is Vladimir Shubin who provided a rare study of the history of the African National Congress. Given the many decades of political, military, diplomatic and financial cooperation between Moscow and the ANC, it was not unusual to find that Shubin had positioned this relationship well in his study of the movement. After all, as pointed out by Shubin the relationship took root as early as 1927 when President Josiah Gumede visited the USSR. In this detailed study he endeavoured to put the record straight by addressing years of academic and media distortions of the relationship. In effect as an insider, he succeeded in unravelling many of the mysteries of this relationship.<sup>16</sup>

While it is not the purpose of this chapter to examine the relationship of the ANC with the USSR, it will be strategic to allude to a comment made by President Oliver Tambo during an interview with *Time* magazine during his visit to the USA in late 1986. When asked to comment on Soviet Aid given to the ANC he responded by pointing out that "we have sought assistance everywhere," and "we found it in some places and not in others." More importantly he added, "No country in the West would give us weapons, so we went to the Soviet Union." Therefore he questioned, "where else could we have gone."<sup>17</sup> This response best explains the pragmatism that guided the ANC's decision to approach the Soviet Union when it did and its constant defence of this relationship. Moreover the Soviet Union was one of the first countries to recognise the ANC as "a legitimate revolutionary liberation movement." According to Professor Esterhuysen, who explored the international status of the movement, this recognition gave the ANC an

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<sup>16</sup> Dr. Vladimir Shubin had a long history of involvement with the ANC since the 1960s and was the Soviet Representative at the ANC's National Conference held in Durban in 1991. See Vladimir Shubin. [ANC A View From Moscow](#) (Cape Town. Mayibuye Books, 1999); Shubin. "Moscow and the ANC: Three Decades of Cooperation and Beyond." Paper presented at Conference on *International Anti-Apartheid Movements in South Africa's freedom Struggle: Lessons for Today*. University of KwaZulu-Natal, 10-13 October 2004.

<sup>17</sup> William R. Doemar. "Rebels with a Cause: Growing Western Recognition for the African National Congress." *Time Magazine* (27 October 1986).

international status of a 'high order' which proved advantageous for the ANC in relation to its attempts to establish relations with the Western countries.<sup>18</sup>

While countries such as the USA may have expressed concerns about the relationship which the ANC enjoyed with Moscow, such evidence has provided me with the platform from which to argue that the relationship did contribute to the process of compelling Washington to take the movement seriously. In any event by 1987 the Soviet Union began to re-examine and reposition this relationship as will be demonstrated later in this study. So it serves to confirm that there were other factors - such as the role of civil society and domestic developments in South Africa—that compelled Washington to take notice of the plight of South Africa's majority and to recognise the ANC as a major player in this dilemma. The USSR, while still a factor, was no longer a critical one.

As I have continued to accord emphasis to the USA/USSR relationship during the Cold War years, throughout this chapter, one may well ask why it was considered important enough to merit scrutiny-this given the fact that there is an enormous body of literature covering this area. But I would like to position my contentions to demonstrate that one cannot undertake any assessment of the relationship between the ANC and USA without doing so within the Cold War lens. Hence I consider a brief overview of how the Cold War played itself out during the tenure of different American administrations, necessary for these purposes.

### ***The Cold War and US Administrations***

Like Magubane, Walter LaFeber has argued that the character of the Cold War changed between 1953 and 1956 forcing the attention of both the US and Russia away from the European arena to the less developed parts of the world. During this period the Russian leader, Khrushchev, having secured the protection of the Soviet Union through the Warsaw Pact turned to newly emerging nations by introducing a new aid programme for these nations.<sup>19</sup> At the same time the Cold War between the USA and Russia played itself

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<sup>18</sup> W. P. Esterhuysen. "The International Political Status of the African National Congress," in *Africa*, Vol. 19, No. 1. 1989. 32.33. See also Chris Alden. "From Liberation Movement to Political Party: ANC Foreign Policy in Transition," in *The South African Journal of International Affairs*. Vol.1(Spring 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Walter LaFeber. *America, Russia and the Cold War 1945-1990*. 172. Fourteen economic and military assistance agreements were contracted with nations in Asia and the Middle East and included countries

out in Egypt during the Suez crisis.<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of this study, this crisis was considered significant because it demonstrated to African and Asian states how Russia could be used for their protection against western imperialism. But as Paul Hastings had pointed out, they had conveniently forgotten Russian's suppression of the Hungarian uprising.<sup>21</sup>

This blinding determination to contain communism caused American administrations from those under John F Kennedy to that under Richard Nixon to blunder from one international crisis to another. This was evident in their involvement in Latin America and South East Asia from the 1960s.<sup>22</sup> President Kennedy's response to such blunders was interesting as he apportioned blame purely to other members of his administration and not to himself. He complained "all my life I've known better than to depend on the experts". "How could I have been so stupid to let them go ahead", he asked.<sup>23</sup> Even their disastrous entry into Vietnam was defended by the President as representing a strategy to end the 'global communist menace.'<sup>24</sup> An important observation made by scholars of this period was that the American administration prided itself on its realism, its 'political pragmatism, and its determination to save emerging nations,' yet it was fraught with many blunders.<sup>25</sup> While this may have been the intention of the administration, these blunders and blinding determination to end the 'global menace' demonstrated a total lack of 'political pragmatism' and this has been demonstrated by my earlier discussion. For the purposes of my arguments, this discussion is relevant in furnishing confirmation on how the US state viewed Africa and its dilemmas.

Hence it was regrettable that the Johnson administration had to be the inheritors of these poorly constructed set of foreign policies principles. But given his belief in the New

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such as North Vietnam, Indonesia, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and Egypt. See also Russel H. Fifield. *Southeast Asia in United States Policy* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1963). 252.

<sup>20</sup> See LaFeber. *America, Russia and the Cold War*. 184 and Robert Engler. *The Politics of Oil: A Study of Private Power and Democratic Directions* (Chicago. Phoenix, 1961) 261.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Hastings. *The Cold War 1945-1969*. (London. Ernest Benn, 1969). 93.

<sup>22</sup> Kennedy pledged military assistance to non-communist countries. Aside from training for anti-guerrilla forces, Kennedy pledged \$20 million for ten years to Latin America, but the growth rate of Latin America failed to materialise. American support of the Bay of Pigs episode on 17 April 1961 which was designed to remove Fidel Castro from power was another disaster.

<sup>23</sup> Conversation with Theodore Sorenson regarding the Bay of Pigs debacle. Theodore C. Sorenson. *Kennedy* (New York. Harper and Row, 1965). 309.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston. Mariner Books, 1979) 548.

<sup>25</sup> David Halberstam. *The Making of A Quagmire* (New York. Random House, 1965). 67.

Frontier and in the creation of a great Society in the domestic sphere, Johnson was determined to wage the Cold War externally, in a sense then continuing with Kennedy's policies towards the conflict in Southeast Asia, with disastrous results.<sup>26</sup>

It is paradoxical that by intervening in the war in Southeast Asia, successive American administrations aimed to contain the spread of the Red Menace. Yet through their many political blunders, they only served to benefit any intervention on the part of their arch enemy- the Soviet Union. With American focus and resources so tied down in Vietnam, Russia emerged favourably in international affairs between 1965 and 1971. She refrained from intervening in the conflict as the protracted nature of the war meant that the US would continue to suffer many losses, much to Russia's benefit. A further benefit for Russia was that American's role in the war was even questioned by her own allies, thus dividing the Western alliance.<sup>27</sup>

Not only did she suffer through the international quagmire in which she found herself, the US administration also experienced crises back home. These included the ghetto riots, the assassinations and the anti war riots between 1964 and 1968.<sup>28</sup> In the midst of all of this, Richard Nixon won the Republican nomination and ascended to the American Presidency in November 1965.<sup>29</sup> This scenario proved to the ANC that its early decision to strengthen relations with the Soviet Union meant that it was backing the right horse. In spite of this, the argument that will be advanced will be that the ANC still saw the USA as a major player to be courted in its attempts to isolate the apartheid state.

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<sup>26</sup> American investment in terms of troops continued unceasingly with 15 500 troops in the country by 1964. As Paul Hastings has estimated that by April 1960, more bombs had been dropped on North Vietnam than on Europe during the Second World War. See Hastings. *The Cold War*. 120.

<sup>27</sup> In 1966 Charles De Gaulle pulled France out of NATO in protest against what he termed 'foreign intervention' in Southeast Asia. In fact the allies refused to send troops in support of the US in Vietnam.

<sup>28</sup> See James E. Jackson. *The Bold, Bad 60s* (New York. International Publishers, 1992). 117, on the ghetto riots in Detroit, Newark and Los Angeles which caused the loss of many lives. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jnr. in April 1968 resulted in major eruptions in Washington which required the deployment of the army. In 1968 Robert Kennedy was assassinated and in the same year Johnson had to deal with anti-war riots in Chicago.

<sup>29</sup> La Feber. *America, Russia and the Cold War*. 256. Even his Vietnam policy was a dismal failure with 20000 Americans and 300 000 Asians killed between 1969 and 1972.

### ***The Cold War and the Liberation Struggle***

To understand the intensity of the link between the Cold War and the liberation struggle raging on the African continent's most Southern tip, it is essential to undertake an investigation into the place of the South African dilemma within this cold war diplomacy? There is considerable scholarship in this area with scholars providing interpretations within the USA/Pretoria context. But in the same token, there is unfortunately a vacuum in literature focusing on Washington's stance on liberation movements such as the African National Congress. Hence this chapter has provided challenges as it has been difficult to locate primary evidence on this area. This challenge allows me to conclude that since Washington remained steadfast in its policy not to engage with liberation movements, which in essence, may have accorded movements such as the ANC some official USA recognition, there has been no official recorded discussions on this issue. Even the study of the memoranda that moved between state officials and Presidents, such as those in the Kennedy library has yielded no significant material.<sup>30</sup> This concern has been shared by scholars such as Christian de Vos.<sup>31</sup>

In trying to understand the reasons for this, I have been guided by the view that South Africa never occupied centre stage in USA politics during this time. As already pointed out, it played second fiddle to other crises that faced the successive American administrations. This was demonstrated when the US called for the liberation of Eastern Europe from communist dominance, while at the same time, according to Thomas Noer, it faced a 'dilemma' when it came to the liberation of southern Africa. In challenging conservative analyses of American Foreign Policy, Noer pointed to evidence of the existence of hard interests such as trade and defence which clashed with soft interests such as human rights. Another consideration was the existence of a complicated relationship between domestic issues and foreign policy. American policy, through most decades was designed with two purposes: to placate domestic demands as well as to hold onto European allies.<sup>32</sup> This often resulted in conflicting statements and action.

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<sup>30</sup> During research undertaken at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, the National Security Files for the period 1961-1963 were perused. Results of this perusal yielded this observation. Presidents Office Files: National Security Files, 1961-1963. Boxes 3-6.

<sup>31</sup> De. Vos. "Balancing Acts."

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Noer. *Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa 1948-1968* (Columbia. University of Missouri, 1985). 15. Departing from the conservative body of scholarship that characterised earlier studies of the American Foreign Policy, Noer provided a revisionist view of the subject by focusing on this area in relation to liberation movements on the African continent.

That America built up an image of being the champion of anti-colonialism was undeniable. But this was an inaccurate perception of her role. This was seen during the early period of the cold war when the Truman administration embarked on a drive to aggressively propagate its anti-imperialist image to the extent of explaining its battle with communism as one 'between freedom and slavery.'<sup>33</sup>

What is clear is that internal matters can influence 'foreign affairs' of a country. This happened during the Kennedy years, when the American Civil Rights Movement of the 60s influenced the country's international relations and policies, especially toward Africa. Kennedy's approach to Africa was associated with the rise of black agitation in the US. The civil rights movement and the demand for black freedom in Africa became two areas which held the common aim of eradicating racism. Any American foreign policy committed to issues of human rights, equality and the elimination of racial prejudice had to encounter the spectre of apartheid.

Regardless of these perceptions, early scholarship on the Kennedy years pointed to dilemmas Kennedy faced-dilemmas which placed constraints on his ability to assist in the ending of apartheid in SA. Firstly, Kennedy realised that unlike countries like Angola, in the case of SA, there was no guerrilla movement in the country, and secondly there was no 'mother country' to pressure. More importantly, South Africa, more than any other country in Africa, was of economic and strategic importance to the US and the Western Europe.<sup>34</sup> So it was not surprising to find the American business community opposed to any strategy that would restrict their trade and investment with South Africa. This demonstrated how heavily dependent American industries were on good relations with SA.<sup>35</sup> But at the same time it could justifiably be demonstrate that during this time purely economic interests did not shape policy decisions. They were but one of the many areas that influenced foreign policy decisions. Military and strategic interests carried far more influence.

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<sup>33</sup> Noer. *Black Liberation*. 18.

<sup>34</sup> Noer. *Black Liberation*. 127. Noer provides a good summary of the value of South Africa as outlined by Kennedy.

<sup>35</sup> See US Congress Hearings, US South Africa Relations (ANC Archives, Luthuli House, Washington Office Records, Folder 13, Box 12).

And so it was that when Kennedy succeeded Eisenhower, it was expected that the new administration would take a tough hand with Pretoria.<sup>36</sup> Even the South African authorities feared problems with the US after his assumption of office. Senator Frank Moss, then Senator of Utah did forecast a dramatic change in policy toward apartheid under Kennedy, with a clear commitment to freedom and the ending of racial problems in SA.<sup>37</sup> These views were commonplace and were derived from prevailing judgements that this was a liberal administration.<sup>38</sup> But recent scholarship has provided an alternate view which causes me to review my earlier pronouncements of constraints placed on Kennedy. This body of evidence represents a widening of perspectives to include many previously ignored factors such as social, economic, cultural and political factors of a domestic and foreign nature, this allowing the authors to demonstrate that Kennedy's administration was reluctant or not inclined to act against the apartheid state.<sup>39</sup>

The Kennedy administration was divided by the tensions caused by differing views of key officials who either fell into the Africanist or Europeanist camp. But Kennedy was strategic in his appointment of these officials ensuring that choosing Africanists such as Mennen Williams as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Bowles as Under Secretary of State, Wayne Fredericks as Deputy Secretary of State and Adlai Stevenson as UN Ambassador demonstrated his support for African decolonisation. But his more senior appointments reflected his concern that European issues far surpassed those relating to the African continent. These appointments were also indicative of his desire to placate European allies. These senior appointments included officials such as Dean Rusk as Secretary of State, Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defence and he retained J. Edgar Hoover as Head of the FBI and Allen Dulles as Head of the CIA. While the former group called for a tough stance against Pretoria and for contact with

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<sup>36</sup> The seat of the apartheid government was located in city of Pretoria.

<sup>37</sup> *New York Times* (22 June 1961).

<sup>38</sup> John F. Kennedy developed a track record in the US Senate for his anti-colonial views prior to ascending to the Presidency. Therefore for those visitors from the African continent, 'Kennedy became the man to meet'. See Richard Mahoney. *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York. Oxford University Press, 1983). 22.

<sup>39</sup> See Brenda Gayle Plummer(ed.). *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil rights and Foreign Affairs 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); T. Borstelmann. *The Cold War and the Colour Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge. Harvard University Press, 2001); De Vos. "Balancing Acts;" Noer. "Segregationists and the World: The Foreign Policy of White Resistance," in Plummer(ed.). *Window on Freedom*.

liberation movements, the latter appeared unwilling to tackle apartheid and its creators head on.<sup>40</sup>

For instance, George Ball who hinted at the dangers of isolating South Africa, argued convincingly that the US should maintain all economic, political and cultural links with the country to display to the white minority state, ‘the evolving social ideas of the west’. Any belief that Washington could compel the Afrikaners to abandon racial inequality was according to him “pie in the sky.”<sup>41</sup> Africanists such as Williams, remained highly critical of apartheid and promised stern efforts on the part of his administration to bring about changes. He labelled apartheid “a wrongheaded policy, fraught with dangers not alone to the peoples of South Africa, but to international peace.” But from the debates that took place in the corridors of power, key evidence was found to support my view that Africanists in the administration were not successful in influencing policy in the Kennedy administration. In fact, throughout 1961 America obstructed UN efforts to impose mandatory sanctions against SA. By the end of 1961 American policy toward South Africa was clearly one that could be described as a ‘middle course’.

The usual concern about the threat of communism in South Africa and the rest of the continent also surfaced. Joseph Satterthwaite, US Ambassador to SA, indicated his concern over the rising communist influence in SA by alluding to the influence of the SACP and by calling for greater military aid which could assist “counter insurgency” activities by the Afrikaners to the communists’ threat.<sup>42</sup> Satterthwaite met with Chief Albert Luthuli in 1963 to discuss the activities of MK and according to him, Luthuli remained committed to non-violence, but that other members of the ANC were determined to turn to “terrorist activities” to secure their freedom.<sup>43</sup> Kennedy was concerned that the crises in many African countries could clear the path for communism threat and infiltration. He was also greatly influenced by the situation in Congo. What is significant about the Congo issue was that it gave the conservatives in the administration the necessary ammunition to argue that African countries were not ready for majority

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<sup>40</sup> See also Peter J. Schraeder. United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change (Cambridge, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Cambridge University Press, 1994). In his study the author provides a theoretical analysis of US Policy toward Africa in the post war years. Special reference is made to the Kennedy era.

<sup>41</sup> George Ball. The Discipline of Power: Essentials of Modern World Structure (Boston. Little Brown, 1968). 255.

<sup>42</sup> Satterthwaite was considered by Pretoria to be a ‘friend’.

<sup>43</sup> Noer. Black Liberation. 137.

rule.<sup>44</sup> In fact the only evidence of the Kennedy administration's abhorrence against apartheid appeared in 1963, when after much criticism it voted in favour of a UN resolution banning weapon sales to SA. But then again this only happened after Adlai Stevenson explained that America would honour existing commitments.

Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson ensured there was little change in American policy towards SA. In any event, I would contend that there was not much significant action in the early years for two reasons: Johnson was involved in the fight for the passage of the civil rights bill and in his election campaigns. So he was not likely to embark on any drastic policy changes that could have adversely affected his campaign initiatives. In fact the relative silence on South Africa was rapidly seized upon by the South African authorities as was evident in a remark by a South African diplomat who observed to a State Department official that "you haven't been too horrible to us recently."<sup>45</sup> While Menon Williams vehemently denied any relaxation in such opposition, in 1964 Washington did moderate its policies with the result that the official rhetoric against apartheid took on a more moderate tone. This was evident in March 1964 when Williams, who for three years was at the forefront of the verbal assaults on SA, submitted a draft speech (to be presented at Harvard) to the State Department for their comment. The relevant authorities at the department attacked his speech as being "too provocative." The content of his speech suggested that the administration was considering the imposition of sanctions against South Africa. But Satterthwaite chided him for his failure to use quiet diplomacy.<sup>46</sup>

State reaction to the Rivonia trial was also a clear indication of policy towards South Africa. Since Sharpeville, no other event in South Africa generated such considerable international attention and protest. Even the American press joined the international press corp in denouncing the South African government. Britain implored Washington to jointly ensure the conclusion a fair trial for the accused. The US State's response was to send Judge Charles Fahy as the official observer of the trial proceedings. When five of

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<sup>44</sup> Kennedy believed that if stability did not return to the Congo, it would pave the way for communism to take hold. Former Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba was considered to be a 'dangerous radical' who had to be eliminated. The CIA planned many assassinations attempts, but in January 1961, troops from the Congo murdered him. Although there was no evidence to implicate the USA in this murder, African leaders blamed the Kennedy administration. Attacks against the USA raged, while the situation in the Congo worsened. See Noer. *Black Liberation*. 137.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted by Noer in *Black Liberation*. 158.

<sup>46</sup> Noer. *Black Liberation*. 159.

the defendants, including Mandela were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island, Fahy reported that the trial was fair. He added that those found guilty were guilty of “revolutionary activity.”<sup>47</sup>

That the administration found the South African issue a complex one was evident during Mennen Williams’s submission to the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Committee of Foreign Affairs. In his submission, Williams acknowledged that given the racial dilemmas, SA posed one of the most difficult problems faced by policymakers purely because “it involved one of the most sensitive aspects of human relations, the problem of getting different races to live together in mutual respect and cooperation.”<sup>48</sup> In formulating policy towards SA, he cautioned the US to consider the liabilities as well as the benefits of the relations. He pointed out for instance, that the reason for the communists’ successes in Africa was due to their efforts to identify with the aspirations of South Africa’s majority and by emphasising the US relationship with the white State.

In July 1964, when the Civil Rights Bill was passed, it was hoped by certain quarters that the passage of this bill would indicate America’s commitment to racial equality and Africa while others hoped that this would lead to a more involved role in the South African dilemma. This came to pass when Johnson became involved, but not in the way many expected. In resuming with Kennedy’s arms embargo, the president faced extreme difficulties in keeping up the spirit of the embargo, especially in relation to the problems faced by the Lockheed contract relating to the sale of submarines and aircraft to SA. By turning down permission for the sale of submarines Johnson’s action was indicative of Washington’s commitment to the terms of the embargo and to some kind of dissociation with the Afrikaner government. This in spite of the administration’s lack of interest in any kind of anti-apartheid action. Such actions encouraged Africans in the US as well as in South Africa and members of the liberation movement.<sup>49</sup>

But it was the situation in the Congo that made such optimism a short lived phenomenon. As it did for Kennedy, this issue raised its head again and hence depleted any further support for the African cause. Even African leaders were bitter in their

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<sup>47</sup> Noer. *Black Liberation*. 161.

<sup>48</sup> Magubane. “United States/South Africa Relations.”

<sup>49</sup> Schraeder. *US Foreign Policy Towards Africa*. 207.

criticism, especially after the Stanleyville raid, of what they considered to be the beginnings of US intervention and cooperation with Belgium. Officials also feared that African governments would not be able to maintain good anti-communist governments. These developments caused officials to call for a cautious policy with Africa and this was certain to impact on any policy towards liberation organisations such as the ANC.

Criticism of the administration's lack of interest in apartheid came from others quarters such as the African Americans and the liberals. Martin Luther King Jnr. joined this quarter by striking out at the United States for promoting 'tyranny' by refusing to implement any direct pressure such as economic sanctions. He questioned whether Washington was waiting for a bloodbath 'before they recognised a crisis.'<sup>50</sup> King was joined by George Houser, Executive Director of the American Committee on Africa, the National Student's Association, the African Studies Association and the Methodists Church. Protests by more radical groups followed with the Students for a Democratic Society staging protests in New York, Boston, Detroit, San Francisco and Washington.<sup>51</sup>

These protests in the 1960s raised fears of conservatives that such action could lead to American confrontations over South Africa. But this did not happen as America became more involved in the Vietnam War and South Africa seized the opportunity to pledge its commitment and support of the war and of its abhorrence of communism. In view of these crises facing the American authorities, it came as no surprise that South Africa did not enjoy centre stage. In the same year, the US abstained on a resolution in the UN calling for "universally applied mandatory sanctions" against South Africa. Not surprisingly, the US delegate to the UN justified the abstention by drawing attention to the violent tone of the resolution, which he believed would not do anything to change apartheid. Business and military leaders used this opportunity to call for the elimination of further restrictions in SA as they considered punitive restrictions to be detrimental to their business operations.<sup>52</sup> As they considered Johannesburg to be the Detroit of South Africa, they were keen to exploit opportunities provided by the city. Noer again provided interesting statistics on US executives attitudes to SA. According to him, a poll of US

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<sup>50</sup> *New York Times* (8 December 1964). 53

<sup>51</sup> George Houser Interview with Walter Sisulu, ANC Headquarters, 1994-1995. Audio Collection. ANC Archives. University of Fort Hare.

<sup>52</sup> "US and South Africa: The Ties. The Differences" in *US News and World Report*, 64. 22 April 1968. 96-98. Washington Office Collection, Pamphlet Box 12, ANC Archives. University of Fort Hare.

executives in SA found 60% felt the nation “was attempting to solve the racial situation.” Over 40% said they would vote for the Nationalist party if eligible and only 9% saw apartheid as “altogether incorrect.”<sup>53</sup>

My arguments therefore demonstrate that for the ANC, the picture was bleak. There had been no consistent condemnation by the US of apartheid policies, nor has there been any evidence of an inclination to support strong action against South Africa. Further there had been no desire to build strong links with the liberation movements such as the ANC, or even any interest in African affairs. Even worse, Williams resigned in 1966 hence removing the last serious supporter of fresh foreign policy initiatives against apartheid. The Vietnam War, the domestic racial problems and the communist phobia ruined any sign of hope for freedom. But the ANC persevered in its attempts to develop a relationship with this powerhouse.

Before proceeding to examine successive administrations views on liberation movements and the apartheid state, I would like to pause and explore the question of why the ANC persevered in its attempts to forge a relationship with the US State. The answer was partially provided by Enuga Reddy, former Director of the UN Centre Against Apartheid who in an interview in 2006 explained that because the USA was the ‘leader of the Western alliance’ and because the state was ‘protecting the regime in South from effective international pressure’, the ANC needed to get the attention of the USA. The only way to do this was to forge a relationship with the American state.<sup>54</sup>

But as evidence continued to prove, US administrations moved headlong on a rightward path and hence worked toward strengthening ties with the apartheid state. Even though this happened not long after Sharpeville, it made this move all the more ironical since it would appear that even the atrocities perpetrated by the apartheid state did nothing to change opinions in Washington. My view remains in variance with scholars such as Christopher Coker and Daan Prinsloo who have credited events at Sharpeville and

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<sup>53</sup> Noer. *Black Liberation*. 180.

<sup>54</sup> Interview which I undertook with Enuga Reddy in May 2006 in New York. Enuga Reddy was the former Director of the UN Centre against Apartheid and even after his retirement from the UN, continued to play a significant role in the post apartheid South Africa. From my time Yale University up to recent years, he generously furnished me with copies of documents which he considered important for my research. While we have innumerable face-to-face discussions, telephonic and electronic conversations, this was the only formal interview which I conducted with him. Interview in possession of author. Folder 3.

Soweto for a hardening of US attitudes towards South Africa.<sup>55</sup> My evidence allows me to argue that while these events may have raised some degree of awareness of the ANC's struggle against apartheid, they did not cause a hardening of attitudes in Washington.

### ***National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39) and Liberation Movements***

Nothing demonstrates this better than the formulation of a document entitled the *National Security Study Memorandum* or known as *NSSM 39* during the Nixon administration. For the purposes of strengthening my arguments, a substantial scrutiny of this piece of evidence was required. Drafted under the direction of the US President's National Security Advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, it was significant for a number of reasons. Firstly it was a secret document and secondly it was expected to provide the National Security Council with guidelines for a US policy framework for Southern Africa. This therefore demonstrates that the USA considered Southern African as developing into an important component of US foreign policy, the reasons of which will be explored in the course of this and the following chapter.

Hence any study of US policy towards South Africa would not be complete without an analysis of this document which included five elemental goals of US policy.

They were:

- to improve the US standing in black Africa and internationally on the racial issue;
- to minimize the likelihood of escalation of violence in the area and the risk of US involvement;
- to minimize the opportunities for the USSR and China to exploit the racial issue in the region for propaganda advantage and to gain political influence with black governments and liberation movements;
- to encourage moderation of the current rigid racial and colonial policies of the white regimes;
- To protect economic, scientific and strategic interests and opportunities in the region, including the orderly marketing of South Africa's gold production.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See these studies of US policy towards South Africa; Daan Prinsloo. United States Policy and the Republic of South Africa. And Coker. The United States and South Africa.

<sup>56</sup> Kevin Danaher. The Political economy of US Policy Towards South Africa (London. Westview Press, 1985) 91.

Option two of the NSSM 39, which was to prove critical in future developments of policy stated that “the whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them. There is no hope for blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence...” For scholars like Thomas Karis this option was interpreted as being “to be a gross miscalculation.” This policy shift was intended to remain secret and according to Karis, the state department maintained that Option Two was not adopted.<sup>57</sup> The name that Option Two inherited was interesting. Dubbed the ‘Tar baby Option’ the premises of this option collapsed in the wake of a series of international events which included the coup in Lisbon.<sup>58</sup>

According to Roger Morris, who was one of the main authors of the study, it was intriguing to note how ‘clientism’ and not objectivity determined the positions that were adopted by the different agencies. For example the position taken by the CIA was “so transparently pro-white,” while Treasury and Commerce remained vehemently hostile to any policy which could adversely affect their attempts at “corporate expansion.” Even Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, David Newson neglected to offer any opposition to these radical pro-white policies’ for he believed that while any isolation of the apartheid state could result in greater resistance to change, opening the doors of communication could instead succeed in speeding up the pace of change. He even provided his guarantee to officials that any possible opposition from the African quarter in the UN was “containable.”<sup>59</sup>

What NSSM 39 also demonstrated was that the behaviour of officials in the Nixon administration was driven by personal interests, organizational interests and organizational prejudices. Individual perceptions of Africa and African issues were also determining factors in policy making initiatives. For example, whenever African issues emerged as areas of discussion, Alexander Haig gestured wildly as though he was beating

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Karis. ‘United States Policy towards South Africa’. 334.

<sup>58</sup> This name was drawn from the story “Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby”, an Uncle Remus Story by Joel Chandler Harris; in which Brer Fox who used a sticky doll to capture Brer Rabbit. Brer Rabbit attacked tar baby with his hands and feet and became totally stuck. The term has often been used to describe situations or problems from which it is difficult to extricate oneself. The US experienced this during its involvement in Rhodesia. For this see Anthony Lake. *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option: American Policy towards Rhodesia* (New York. Columbia Press, 1976). For further evidence on international developments which led to the collapse of ‘tar baby’ see Prinsloo. *United States Foreign Policy*. 49.

<sup>59</sup> Danaher. *Political Economy of US Policy*. 91-92.

drums on the table.<sup>60</sup> The President himself could not understand that African tribes could be more intelligent and accomplished than others, referring to African people as 'jigs'.<sup>61</sup> Other officials were unable to distinguish between Rhodesia and South Africa.

But however scholars, whether conservative Europeanist or Africanist, analyse the study, in spite of its use of fancy political jargon, I can make a simple and obvious conclusion. NSSM 29 favoured Pretoria. The policy path finally chosen by Washington was one of moderation or low political cost, hence indicating a synergy with policy of previous administrations like that of John F. Kennedy.<sup>62</sup> In presenting the range of evidence I have succeeded in demonstrating that NSSM 39 was instrumental in providing us with that window into US policy goals and its criteria for greater international intervention. Therefore it was not surprising that when in 1971, Portugal faced its crisis of empire, President Nixon intervened swiftly. The rationale for this intervention was that the US required not only a powerful NATO, but also access to Portugal's strategic base in the Azores.<sup>63</sup>

While NSSM 39 may have spelt a certain doom for liberation organisations, there was no specific reference to such movements. But given these policy directions, scholars did not require further evidential support to gauge attitudes towards such organisations. The writing was clearly on the wall. But such evidence does exist and came in the form of two events that occurred during the Nixon Presidency. One was an article in the *New York Times*, and dated 2 April 1972 and the other was the visit of the US Secretary of State, William Roger to the African continent in February 1970.

Southern Africa and its problems were of secondary importance to the Nixon administration and the latter was also loathe to become involved with liberation

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<sup>60</sup> Alexander Haigh was the National Security Council Aide to President Nixon.

<sup>61</sup> Danaher. *Political Economy of US Policy*. 93.

<sup>62</sup> The 'new' foreign policy initiatives were launched and formalised through the signing of this document by then President Nixon in February 1970, ten years after Sharpeville and the banning of the African National Congress. This document also included other more specific guidelines which included amongst others the realization of the arms embargo to SA and the relaxation of the arms embargo to Portugal. See Danaher. *Political Economy of US Policy*. 93. See also Magubane. "South Africa-USA Relations." 11.

<sup>63</sup> In return for such access, Nixon signed an executive agreement that made available to that country a loan of \$436 million which assisted Portugal with covering the costs of its colonial wars in Africa. In 1972, Nixon authorised the sale of military transport vehicles to Portugal, followed by further loans for the purchase of helicopters needed for use against liberation movements in its colonies. As a result Portugal became the only NATO ally to allow US aircraft en route to Israel during the Yom Kippur war to refuel in its territories. See Magubane.

organisations of the region, This was communicated in evidence alluded to earlier on in relation to the *New York Times* article. A Mr. Terence Smith, about which I was unable to get further information, alerted readers to a secret debate within the Nixon administration, where the Defence Department indicated the need to treat the apartheid state as any sovereign friendly nation, without any regard for her internal policies. But the National Security Council favoured a partial relationship towards South Africa combined with milder language at the UN and elsewhere. As seen from the *NSSM*, the latter course was already agreed upon. Mr. Smith went on to report that Nixon and his advisors reached agreement that since the USA was involved in Indo-China and elsewhere, it could not take on the problem of Southern Africa and its organisations.<sup>64</sup>

The second piece of evidence comes from the then Secretary of State, William Roger's African tour, during which he seductively referred to the "unfinished business of liberation" and of his administration's 'depth of feeling' of the crises facing the African continent. Yet during his visit to the OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa, it was reported that he refused to even discuss the Southern African problem. In a statement to American ambassadors, he clearly emphasized that the USA will "not become involved with liberation movements" and that the Southern African problem could only be resolved through a programme of "peaceful change." This statement supports initial conclusion relating to the challenge of locating primary material on the USA's stance on liberation movements. There was only one stance and that was one of non-involvement with freedom movements on the African continent. Roger proceeded to point out that the African continent "should be removed from the cockpit of international competition between the great powers." For this purpose, it was important for the US to secure agreements with other major powers involved on the continent on the premise that the situation in Africa, and more specifically in Southern Africa, could best be served in this way. This visit was well documented by the ANC's publication, *Sechaba*, which provided a party analysis of the tour and of Nixon's foreign policy speech.<sup>65</sup>

*Sechaba* also provided an official ANC reaction to these developments. The movement perceived such understandings and agreements as being part of the US strategy to ensure that "the liberation movements would disappear for want of international support and

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<sup>64</sup> *New York Times* (2 April 1972).

<sup>65</sup> *Sechaba*. Vol. 4. No. 5 May 1970. 12, 13.

assistance” and that vital states such as Tanzania and Zambia would “lose interest and become inward looking...and reach accommodations with the apartheid states.” Their interpretation of this inter-connected set of approaches and policies- which involved opposition to the liberation movements, peaceful change, “withdrawing Africa from the strategic battleground of the cold war” and conditional economic aid-as a means of “safeguarding southern Africa as a critical base area for international imperialism in the African continent.”<sup>66</sup> Little wonder then that the Vorster and Smith regimes welcomed the Nixon initiatives and Roger’s pronouncements as “realistic” and “refreshing.”<sup>67</sup>

The African National Congress faced the daunting realization that any attempt to establish a relationship with, and seek assistance from the US, was grim. All evidence pointed to the commitment of the Nixon administration to assisting the South African state to entrench its powers and privileges. In its analysis of the Nixon policy, the *New York Times* declared that the effect of such policy would be “...to treat the stability of Southern Africa as a strategic interest of the United States which in effect will call for more explicit collaboration with the Southern African regime in the military and political fields.”<sup>68</sup> The lessons learned from the Nixon administration were indeed harsh for those involved in the cause for South African freedom. As it was by now inarguable that that collaboration between South Africa and this administration was strengthened.

### ***The Role of Henry Kissinger***

The situation was worsened in 1973 when Henry Kissinger assumed the position of Secretary of State. Danaher pointed out that as Secretary of State only one ambassador from the African continent was allowed access to Kissinger-Johan Botha of South Africa. Even the head of the South African intelligence agency, Hendrik van der Bergh visited Washington often and maintained close ties with George Bush who was Head of the CIA at the time.<sup>69</sup> Such engagements set the tone for future interactions with Pretoria during the Kissinger era.

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<sup>66</sup> *Sechaba*, 5 May 1970.

<sup>67</sup> As announced by the South African Foreign Minister and reported in *Sechaba*..

<sup>68</sup> *New York Times* (2 April 1972).

<sup>69</sup> Danaher. *Political Economy of US Policy*. 97.

As argued earlier on, the domestic crisis and related events such as Sharpeville in South Africa did not influence any change in Washington's policy towards South Africa and the ANC. Three years later, when in June 1976 the Soweto uprising shook the apartheid state, Kissinger's name continued to dominate the areas of USA foreign policy and the African continent. This in itself provided the answer to any question one may ask regarding changing USA foreign policies. Since the uprising captured the international spotlight and focused significant attention on the plight of South Africa's majority, the ANC though unprepared for this event, appeared encouraged and hopeful of a change in the international climate in so far as support for its activities were concerned. But in the case of the USA, this was not to be. At about this time the USA was close to undergoing a drastic change in leadership as the country prepared for the Presidential election of that year. But before the current administration under Gerald Ford left office, US policy remained consistent for as Danaher reminded us that it was Kissinger who "really called the shots on foreign policy." Further he pointed out that while Ford was in command, it was "Kissinger who personified US policymaking."<sup>70</sup> A former member of Kissinger's National Security Council provided a good summation of this perception by explaining that since Ford entered the Presidency being "unprepared", "unknown" and inheriting "the most corrupt administration in memory", he found Kissinger indispensable in appearance and fact."<sup>71</sup>

With the collapse of Portuguese Colonialism, the USA's attention to Southern Africa was certainly heightened, resulting in greater internal conflict within the Ford administration. While this conflict provided evidence of a US policy move slightly to the left, the basic objectives of US policy remained the same.<sup>72</sup> Using the strategy of "shuttle diplomacy" for much of 1976, Kissinger travelled around the Southern African region in an attempt to persuade presidents of the Frontline States to coerce Zimbabwean liberation movements to the conference table. Simultaneously he persuaded Vorster to do the same with Ian Smith.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Danaher. *Political economy of US Policy*. 179.

<sup>71</sup> Roger Morris. *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York. Harper and Row, 1977). 292.

<sup>72</sup> This meant that those regimes that were friendly and open to western capital as well as hostile to Soviet interests.

<sup>73</sup> His concern with Zimbabwe lay purely in his desire to project the image that the resolution of the conflict in Rhodesia was the result of his own efforts. From a policy point of view if a 'moderate African government could be installed through negotiation in Zimbabwe, vital western economic interests could

That he was holding meetings, as Secretary of State, with John Vorster, the leader of the apartheid state was indeed a major concession to Pretoria. Scholars have viewed these meetings as a break with US policy which discouraged public contacts with South African leaders. In June 1976, Kissinger, during an address to the US House International Committee, vehemently rejected allegations of his having made any promises to Vorster. Yet it was later discovered that he in fact did make many positive overtures to Vorster in return for the latter's cooperation on Rhodesia.<sup>74</sup>

Again it was Sechaba that furnished confirmation of the ANC's reactions and views of developments arising out of Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy." The ANC appeared disconcerted and labelled his methods "dangerous" for two reasons. Firstly, then Secretary General Alfred Nzo claimed that the purpose of US diplomacy was to "cut the umbilical cord" linking the liberation movements to "the world socialist system" especially the Soviet Union and Cuba.<sup>75</sup> Secondly Nzo made the claim that the kind of policy result that the US envisaged for Africa was "neo-colonialist" and "pro-imperialist" because its objective was to safeguard western economic and strategic interests." I believe that this was obvious not only to the ANC but to any international observer of USA foreign policy. Nzo went further to call on progressive support groups to build powerful lobbies to oppose the growing economic collaboration between South Africa and the governmental structures of Britain, the US, France, West Germany and Japan and to secure the international isolation of the apartheid state.<sup>76</sup> The extent to which Nzo's call was heeded will be explored in the Chapter V.

On the domestic realm Kissinger's African policy received much criticism from the Conservatives in Washington. Moreover since that was an election year, the Ford administration was concerned about the challenge from such Conservatives. It was alleged that Ronald Reagan's victory in the Texas primary was assisted by the Secretary of State's trip to southern Africa and his efforts to secure majority rule for Rhodesia.

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be protected. This strategy could also curtail future demands of radical groups in Namibia and South Africa and also stop the spread of the Soviet influence in Southern Africa.

<sup>74</sup> He invited the South African navy to send a frigate to the US as part of the country's bicentennial celebrations; he offered US sponsorship and training of a Namibian military force in return for cooperation on transfer of power in Namibia; the granting, in 1976-1977 by the International Monetary Fund of credits to the value of \$464 million to South Africa.

<sup>75</sup> Sechaba, First Quarter, 1978, "New Phase of Struggle in South Africa".

<sup>76</sup> Sechaba, First Quarter, 1978.

Kissinger also sought the support of the African-American community for his southern Africa initiatives.<sup>77</sup> There is no evidence to indicate that Kissinger was successful in gaining African-American support for his policies or for that matter, for the Ford administration. Instead one finds that Jimmy Carter gained 90% of the black vote in the 1976 election. In regard to the Rhodesian conflict, Kissinger failed to bring the conflict to its conclusion. This had been attributed to his failure to understand African Affairs.<sup>78</sup> From a more objective position, I would contend that he was merely maintaining the consistence of his predecessor when it came to African Affairs. The African continent never featured prominently in Washington. Given US interest in maintaining corporate and security interests, the US government remained wedded to the white minorities in the region. Granted that officials in Washington verbally attacked the racial policies of the apartheid state, they nevertheless maintained their friendly ties with the white regimes. No decisive action was taken against the latter.

### ***Conclusion***

Concluding this Chapter has been simple. The examination of policy of the US administrations from Kennedy to Nixon towards the ANC has yielded the following conclusion; that state policy was consistent. In spite of the usual rhetoric, the trend was cooperation with the apartheid state and zero contact with liberation organisations such as the ANC, and as such, the whole period appeared bleak for the ANC. In official circles it was apparent that the ANC remained largely unknown and its work unrecognised. That this was a deliberate ploy on the part of policy makers was clear. This allows me to conclude that the ANC's attempts to build a relationship with the western alliance's leading power during this period was made more complex by global developments such as the Cold War, by documents such as NSSM 39 and by the role of individuals such as Henry Kissinger. These indicate the inter-dependence of

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<sup>77</sup> In August 1976 he met with Reverend Sullivan's Opportunities Industrialised Centres, addressed the National Urban League and held private meetings with African American leaders such as Reverend Jesse Jackson, Percy Sutton of the Manhattan Borough and William Booth of the American Committee on Africa. But these leaders made demands of their own calling for Kissinger to reveal details of his meeting with Vorster, granting of political asylum to South African refugees and for Washington to impress upon Pretoria its abhorrence of its racial policies. See Danaher.

<sup>78</sup> He failed to understand the importance of working with African leaders of the Frontline States as instruments of change in Southern Africa. His total reliance on Vorster and Ian Smith was a disastrous strategy. The liberation movements relied on the Frontline states for their economic, political and geographical support. Also the OAU charged the Frontline Presidents with the responsibility for African strategy in the Zimbabwean conflict.

relationships, political dynamics, economic and strategic considerations and international events. An analysis of these factors allows me to conclude that in its attempts to develop a relationship with the ANC, the African national Congress found itself at the mercy of so many different forces.

It paves the way for the next chapter which focuses on the African dynamics and their impact on the ANC's attempts to forge ahead uninterruptedly in its relationship-building initiatives. It also helps us understand why the ANC persevered and succeeded in these attempts, in spite of the support provided by the American administrations to the apartheid state. This understanding opens the door for the forthcoming argument that the decision to keep the lines of communication with Washington open was a strategic one, with the hope of securing a break or a foot in the door. This did come in 1987 and will be explored in Chapter Four.

## *Chapter Three*

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### **AFRICAN DYNAMICS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ANC'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USA**

#### **Abstract**

*In this chapter, my focus moves to another continent to demonstrate how events in that part of the world further complicated the work of South Africa's premier liberation movement. The intention in looking at developments on the African continent between the 1960s and 1970s will be to show that these made it imperative for the ANC to pursue links with a hostile yet powerful United States of America. These developments coincided with the US administrations of Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford. Challenges presented on the African continent exacerbated the organisation's attempts to advance the liberation struggle and the isolation of the apartheid state. What this confirmed is that like other international developments such as the Cold War, African developments also impacted on the ANC's diplomatic efforts in the USA. The triangular relationship between the USA, Africa and the ANC therefore occupies centre stage in this Chapter. What is also important is how the ANC reacted to what could be seen as African betrayal. What added to this disappointment was the eagerness of Francophone African states in developing diplomatic initiatives with Pretoria.<sup>1</sup> In this regard I would argue that the ANC's reactions and guarded responses set the trend for a post apartheid African policy which would see silence, quiet diplomacy and lack of criticism as the order of the day. This was clearly reflected in ANC historiography of the period. Such silences were offset by the realities presented by interviews of key ANC individuals. This issue strengthens my views on the relevance of memory construction and the archive as raised in my introductory Chapter. I will also show that the ANC had no influence on African diplomacy-resulting in a*

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<sup>1</sup> The President of the Ivory Coast, Houphouet-Boigny established a grouping of countries interested in 'dialogue' with Vorster. These included the Central African Republic, Benin, Gabon, Ghana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Swaziland and Upper Volta. The ANC tried to rationalise Francophone African states' enthusiasm for Vorster's dialogue initiatives by questioning whether French Imperialism was behind this. After all these states had close relations with France. See Sechaba, January 1971. 2, 3.

*long and lengthy battle with the African states until 1990. My arguments will be strengthened by focusing on South Africa's new outward looking policy for the region and the African responses to this. These responses were derived through the many regional meetings that took place between 1969-1975. This would also necessitate looking at what US involvement was in this region at this time. While the Chapter examines regional dynamics largely for the 1960s -1970s, it briefly touches on the developments in the 1980s such as the Nkomati Accord as a strategy to demonstrate that winning the battle for the African Soul was still continuing into the 1980s.*

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This Chapter was written at first in 2002 which was a fortuitous time for the Southern African region. It was a time of many regional shifts which had arisen as a result of a triangular relationship that played a significant role in foreseen and unforeseen events such as the death of the Washington-backed Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA rebel leader, on 22 February, the Zimbabwean elections in March and the Inter- Congolese Dialogue, which began in South Africa on 26 February 2002. This chapter was completed in 2008-a year which witnessed the shameful episode of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Given the public and international outrage caused by these events and the accusations of how well South Africans were treated by countries whose citizens became the victims of these attacks, makes the position I have taken in this Chapter, all the more complicated.

The period and events I will be reviewing in this Chapter for the 1960s and 1970s are also indicative of what the repercussions of the triangular relationship between the ANC, USA and Africa, have been. These included the regional shifts for Southern Africa, which impacted on the attempts of the ANC to establish itself in the international arena by securing a relationship with the USA. By looking at these shifts which demonstrated the ANC's failure to influence the direction of African diplomatic policy, I argue that these made it imperative for the ANC to pursue a relationship with one of the major players in the globe

as a means of ensuring its survival and of achieving its goals of forging ahead with its struggle for a democratic South Africa. This happened even though the USA was by 1975 involved in covert activity on the African continent. In advancing this argument, I find myself inclined to support the views of scholars such as Roger Pfister and Scott Thomas who presented evidence to strengthen the view that prior to 1990, the ANC struggled to secure support from and the assistance of the African states.<sup>2</sup> But while Pfister argues that the situation improved in the 1980s I would present evidence to the contrary, instead demonstrating that the situation only showed signs of improving by 1989.<sup>3</sup>

### ***South Africa's activity in the Southern African Region***

The key protagonist of the regional shifts was the apartheid state which had a new leader at its helm. John Vorster, its new Prime Minister implemented his new and dangerous strategy for the region when he assumed his new position in January 1967. To counter the effects of international isolation, Vorster, embarked on a new 'outward policy' towards African states.<sup>4</sup> This radical departure in foreign policy was to pose a serious challenge to the ANC and other liberation movements in the region. But while Vorster's policy may have created enormous problems for the ANC in its work on the African continent, the 1960s proved challenging enough for the movement. With the formation of the Organisation of African Unity(OAU) in 1963, came much hope for the ANC.<sup>5</sup> But for the new organization, with its formation it faced competing attempts by the different liberation movements such as the ANC and PAC to secure its favour and support. Given the ideological and political differences between the two movements, the PAC's policies of black nationalism found appeal on the continent, rather than the non-racialism of the ANC. Evidence for this conclusion came from Nelson Mandela himself who experienced this directly during his African tour when he found his movement coming under intense criticism from African

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Pfister. "Gateway to International Victory," Scott Thomas. Diplomacy of Liberation.

<sup>3</sup> This happened with the signing of the Harare Declaration. Between 1990 and 1994 African states began to play a vital role in the negotiations in South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> It was expected that this policy would help normalise South Africa's relations with African countries.

<sup>5</sup> The 1960s were marked by a wave of independence washing over the continent, with 30 African countries gaining their independence within the decade. All this and the formation of the OAU created a climate of optimism for the ANC. Even the travels of Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela in 1960-1961 through to many African countries created such optimism for the movement. .

countries for their non-racial policy, thus causing him to lament the fact that “in the rest of Africa most African leaders could understand the views of the PAC better than those of the ANC.”<sup>6</sup>

What is significant about Vorster’s policy was that it was to test the strength of ANC-OAU relations and ANC-African relations. The fact that Vorster considered it necessary to implement this policy is evidence that the international efforts at isolating South Africa were taking root. A few years later in September 1970, the goals of Vorster’s ‘outward policy’ became clear when he explained the enthusiasm of the apartheid state to form ‘non-aggression’ pacts with African states on the ‘basis of mutual goodwill and neighbourliness.’<sup>7</sup> Throughout the 1970s these goals manifested themselves in other new initiatives launched by Vorster after the Portuguese coup of 1974 -the policies of dialogue and détente.<sup>8</sup> Again while these efforts serve to indicate that South Africa was under immense pressure, the ANC did not see it this way. For them these efforts meant that their attempts to isolate South Africa were heading for failure.

A study of ANC coverage of regional developments drawn from the organisation’s official publication, *Sechaba*, clearly strengthens my view. For example, the then ANC’s Director of Political Affairs, Duma Nokwe reacted to this alarming development by comparing Vorster’s new policy to “a spider’s web carefully and systematically spun to ensnare weak African governments like flies, into the influence and control of the racists and imperialists.”<sup>9</sup> This reaction was not exaggerated given the fact that the first African leader to respond to Vorster’s new initiatives was Chief Leboa Jonathan from Lesotho, who visited South Africa in 1967. In fact the ANC went so far as to express disappointment and contempt for Lesotho by accusing the latter of humiliating the African continent by going “cap in hand to beg for crumbs from the aggressor’s table.”<sup>10</sup> The ANC’s dilemma worsened when in May of the same year, Malawi’s President Hastings Banda visited South Africa and a day before the

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<sup>6</sup> Nelson Mandela. *Long Walk to Freedom* (Boston. Little Brown, 1995). 361.

<sup>7</sup> James Barber. *South Africa’s Foreign Policy, 1945-1970*. (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1973). 270.

<sup>8</sup> This was another initiative launched by South African Prime Minister John Vorster six months after the Portuguese coup in 1974-to counter optimism generated by the coup for the Liberation Movements. But after South Africa invaded Angola, this initiative collapsed.

<sup>9</sup> *Sechaba*. Vol. 5. No. 6, 1971.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in the ANC’s Weekly News Digest, *Spotlight on South Africa*. (17 February 1967). 7.

OAU summit began in Kinshasa, diplomatic relations between these two countries were established. Relations between South Africa and Malawi began in 1966, when a secret loan was granted for different projects.<sup>11</sup> Nokwe again reacted by sending out a futile and ineffective warning to others planning to follow in Banda's footsteps by cautioning those "who are going to frogmarch to Pretoria," following Malawi, "to wine and dine with the racists," that "he who supps with the devil must use a long spoon."<sup>12</sup>

### ***African Reaction***

Between May 1967 and April 1975 a number of meetings took place on the African continent in order to deal with challenges and threats. While the ANC may have hoped that such meetings would have helped advance the cause of the liberation struggle, this was not to be the case further affirming my argument that they failed to exercise any significant influence on African foreign policy during this time, making it all the more important to get the support of the more powerful Western players. What is also significant is that the ANC failed to secure the support of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).<sup>13</sup> While the movement continued in the post apartheid era to hark back to the unstinting support given by African countries and organizations such as the OAU, evidence has supported another view which showcases a relationship dominated by years of disagreements and subordination.<sup>14</sup> While the ANC was reluctant to openly demonstrate its unhappiness with OAU policy, it had to face the reality that African diplomacy including that of the OAU appeared deaf to the needs of African liberations movements such as the ANC and nonchalant about the apartheid state's activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Instead it devoted its attention to what it considered to be more priority issues such as the problems in Uganda, Egypt, the Nigerian civil war, Chad and Western Sahara. That the ANC could not hold back

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<sup>11</sup> John Barrett. "South African Diplomacy at the UN", in G. R. Barridge and A. Jennings(eds.). Diplomacy at the UN (London. Macmillan Press, 1985). 144.

<sup>12</sup> Sechaba. Vol. 5. No. 6. June 1971.

<sup>13</sup> The OAU was founded in Addis Ababa in 1963 and its launch symbolised Africa's emergence from the evils of colonialism.

<sup>14</sup> These disagreements stemmed from the ANC's failure to get the OAU to accept its views on unity of the different liberation movements and 'priorities for the armed struggle'. See Scott Thomas. Diplomacy of Liberation. 72-76.

its frustration was clear when Tambo criticized the OAU for prioritising these other conflicts while it paid no attention to the “real conflicts” in Southern Africa.<sup>15</sup>

At the OAU Summit in 1967, the ANC suffered its first setback because the OAU was slow to respond to the Malawi and Lesotho actions. This was attributed to the Summit’s concern with the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war and with the problems of the Liberation Committee, rather than with the breach of South Africa’s isolation.<sup>16</sup>

But it was at the fifth summit conference of the Eastern and Central African states in Lusaka in April 1969 where the impact of Vorster’s foreign policy was acknowledged and challenged by thirteen countries, that the shortcomings of ANC influence on African diplomacy was discerned. At this conference a strategy document entitled the “*Lusaka Manifesto on Southern Africa*” was produced.<sup>17</sup> What was important about this document was that again it illustrated how ineffective the ANC was in influencing African policy. Although the *Manifesto* was objectionable to the ANC and to its strategies, it was still adopted as official OAU policy. The ANC had three main objections against this document. Firstly, as the movement was involved in renewed attempts at armed struggle, such as the Wankie Campaign, the *Manifesto* made reference to the importance of “peaceful change.” Secondly, the document undermined the ANC view that the apartheid state was an illegitimate one. Thirdly, the Lusaka *Manifesto* separated the struggles of South Africa from those of Rhodesia and Namibia.<sup>18</sup> Although the latter objection went against ANC military and diplomatic strategy, this policy was endorsed by the frontline states and the OAU.

The signatories of this manifesto endorsed the aim of a liberated Southern Africa. However, much to the horror of the ANC, they went further to suggest their willingness to establish relations with colonial and racist governments. Liberation movements were encouraged to ‘desist from armed struggle’ if those governments provided their acceptance of the ‘principle

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<sup>15</sup> *The Times* (11 August 1984). 4.

<sup>16</sup> This was one of the organs of the OAU which was concerned with African Liberation Policy. It was through this organ that Liberation Movements were able to exercise direct influence on OAU decision making. The Committee included Foreign Ministers of OAU member states and other member states that wanted to attend its meetings.

<sup>17</sup> ANC Archives. Luthuli House. Records of the Zambian Mission. Pamphlet Collection. Box file 21.

<sup>18</sup> David Martin and Phillis Johnson. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (London. Faber and Faber, 1981). 134.

of human equality.”<sup>19</sup> The *African Communist* described the Lusaka Manifesto as “insufferably patronizing and even arrogant.”<sup>20</sup> It was not surprising to find that the chief protagonist of this document was President Banda of Malawi who used this document to justify his collaboration with the racist regime. That the tone of the document was unusually moderate was clear. It pursued the point that preference should be given to ‘negotiation’ rather than destruction and murder. It urged ‘our brothers’ in the resistance movements to use peaceful methods of struggle, even at the cost of some compromise on the timing of change.<sup>21</sup>

Even at the Addis Ababa summit in September 1970, the conference appeared reluctant to endorse any firm action towards South Africa. Instead, it endorsed the Lusaka Manifesto, thus alarming the ANC even more. In regard to the issue of arms sales to South Africa by NATO countries, there was no consensus on the matter of condemning these arm sales. From interviews undertaken with ANC cadres, it was clear that the movement felt strongly about the Lusaka Manifesto. They admitted, though reluctantly, that many in the movement felt betrayed by the document.<sup>22</sup> Yet the ANC did nothing to voice its protest against the terms of the Manifesto. In public, the ANC remained accepting of the terms. Even *Sechaba*, which regularly reported on African conferences, remained quiet on the Lusaka meeting.<sup>23</sup>

Three year later the ANC failed to get any closer to its goal of isolating the apartheid state while at the same time the goals of Vorster’s ‘outward policy’ became clear when he explained the enthusiasm of the apartheid state to form ‘non aggression’ pacts with African states on the “basis of mutual goodwill and neighbourliness.”<sup>24</sup> Throughout the 1970s these goals manifested themselves in the policies of dialogue and détente.<sup>25</sup> This was apparent after the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Madagascar, Gabon, Lesotho, Swaziland, Upper Volta, Niger,

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<sup>19</sup> *The African Communist*, No. 40. 1969. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *The African Communist*.

<sup>21</sup> “The Lusaka Manifesto”. 255. Untitled Document in possession of Author. Anonymous Donor. Folder 4.

<sup>22</sup> Based on interviews done with Mr. J. Ngalo(December 2001), Mr. Zwide(December 2001) who were eastern Cape Veterans. Folder 2.

<sup>23</sup> This conclusion is drawn from my scrutiny of all editions of *Sechaba* published just after the meeting in Lusaka.

<sup>24</sup> James Barber. *South Africa’s Foreign Policy 1945-1970*. 270.

<sup>25</sup> This was another initiative launched by South African Prime Minister John Vorster six months after the Portuguese Coup in 1974, to counter optimism generated by the coup for the Liberation Movements. But after South Africa invaded Angola, this initiative collapsed.

Mauritius, Dahomay, Togo, Gabon and Malagasy-all expressed interests in either visiting with or entering into dialogue with South Africa. What did 'dialogue' offer? According to Nelson this proposal "offered trade, tourism, investment capital and developmental loans to African states which would, in effect, pledge to curtail their opposition to apartheid."<sup>26</sup> For the Rev. Kenneth Carstens, 'dialogue' was intended to open up new markets for South African goods.<sup>27</sup>

Again it was the ANC that suffered the effects of these initiatives and their influence on certain African states: That this was a shock to the movement was apparent. In an article in *Sechaba* of January 1971, the ANC made this obvious.

....from our point of view even more dangerous, are the reported urging by the leaders of the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Ghana and Madagascar for negotiations with the Vorster regime. What a slap in the face this is for those men of vision who held such high hopes in the sixties for the total liberation of the African continent....Our movement badly needs friends, particularly in Africa where lies not only our political base but also our African identity....<sup>28</sup>

But in all fairness to the African states the concern over the issue of 'dialogue' did raise concern to the extent that it dominated the seventeenth session of the Council of Ministers meeting in Addis Ababa in June 1971. In order to generate productive debates on this issue, liberations movements such as the ANC, PAC and SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples Organisation), were encouraged to make opening statements. For the ANC, the issue of 'dialogue' represented "part of a carefully coordinated strategy to gain economic openings, undermine African unity, and cut off support for the liberation governments."<sup>29</sup> As a result of such representations, the meeting in Addis turned down prospects of any dialogue with that country. In spite of these decisions and resolutions, the Presidents of Malawi and the Ivory Coast proceeded with their visits to South Africa. In fact Banda, after his visit, brazenly chided the ANC and PAC for "blatantly spreading untruths about South Africa

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<sup>26</sup> Nelson. "Some External Aspects of Internal Conflict". 209.

<sup>27</sup> Rev. Carstens was a Special consultant to the UN Unit on apartheid.

<sup>28</sup> *Sechaba*. January 1971.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas. *Foreign Relations of the African National Congress*. 134.

overseas.”<sup>30</sup> There was no doubt that the justification for such African responses could be traced to the need for economic assistance from the apartheid state.

But by the time of the Seventh Summit conference of East and Central African States met in Mogadishu in October 1971, the ANC experienced a brief spurt of optimism as the states adopted a harsh stance towards those countries that took advantage of Vorster’s new initiatives in foreign policy. This ‘dialogue group’, as they came to be known, included the Ivory Coast, Malawi, Madagascar, Uganda and Ghana. Given their firm commitment to the cause of Liberation, Presidents Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, led the delegates in issuing the Mogadishu Declaration, which stated that there was “no way left to the liberation of Southern Africa except armed struggle.”<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the greatest significance of this meeting was its granting of observer status, for all future meetings, to liberation movements such as the ANC and PAC.

Given the nature of the terms of the Lusaka Manifesto, it would appear that the resolutions adopted at Mogadishu provided the ANC with a certain degree of optimism in its attempts to secure the support of the region. This positive mood could be contrasted with the somber moods generated by the adoption of the *Lusaka Manifesto*. Then Secretary-General Alfred Nzo was so encouraged that he described the declaration as a ‘revolutionary document,’ expecting it to lead to more support, in different forms, for the liberation movements. Since the OAU Summit had officially rejected ‘dialogue,’ Nzo argued that the OAU represented a threat to South Africa and its allies who had embarked on a ruthless campaign to crush the organization. The Mogadishu Declaration was viewed by many, including the liberation organizations, as a sign of the continent’s commitment to end colonialism and imperialism.<sup>32</sup> By the time of the Rabat Summit in June 1972, much to the delight of the ANC, the issue of ‘dialogue’ as a threat had faded from the discussions, to be replaced by the importance of liberation. For the South African Prime Minister, new strategies had to be devised to consolidate his country’s position in the region.

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas. *Foreign Relations of the African National Congress*. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas. *Foreign Relations of the African National Congress*. 133.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas. *Foreign Relations of the African National Congress*. 134.

While this situation unfolded, the twenty-fourth session of the African Liberation Committee took place in Dar es Salaam in January 1975. A highlight of the meeting was the production of another major policy document entitled 'The African Strategy in Southern Africa.' Yet again this was another document which caused the ANC's optimism to be a short lived phenomenon. For Scott has argued that there were many similarities between this document and the 'Lusaka Manifesto.'<sup>33</sup> Like the manifesto, the strategy encapsulated in this document separated the Rhodesian and Namibian struggles from the South African struggle. Much to the dismay of the ANC, it went further to prioritise those struggles as was done previously.

The Front Line States (FLS) such as Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia supported this document and even worse, the OAU later provided its endorsement.<sup>34</sup> The role of the former in relation to the ANC's struggle on the continent finds application in this interrogation of African dynamics. According to Abillah Harrid Omari, who conducted a thorough investigation of the rise and decline of the FLS, "the formation of this alliance in the mid-1970s represented one of the most important developments in contemporary Southern Africa." Yet he also acknowledged that while the alliance demonstrated its commitment to liberation movements such as the ANC through its opposition to apartheid, its actions and views remained in line with those of other "regional groupings".<sup>35</sup> Hence its support of documents such as 'The African Strategy in Southern Africa.' Although the FLS was not only a product of the conflict which riddled the region, and also of the South Africa regional initiatives such as 'détente', it lacked the military capacity to match the apartheid state's aggressive might. Hence while the formation of the FLS may have been viewed as an encouraging development for liberation organisations such as the ANC, its subsequent actions and relationships added further constraints to the movement's efforts in the region.

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas. *Foreign Relations of the African National Congress*. 135.

<sup>34</sup> The Front Line States were a loose grouping of African states that got together to ensure regional security in response to Vorster's initiatives of 'détente' in 1974. It initially included the independent states in Southern Africa such as Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique and Angola. After the collapse of 'détente' they became a vital negotiating force.

<sup>35</sup> Abillah Harrid Omari. "The Rise and Decline of the Front Line States (FLS) Alliance in Southern Africa: 1975-1990". Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (Dalhousie University, 1991). 1. For an assessment of these actions and relationships see this study which celebrates the formation of this alliance and laments its demise.

It was apparent to the ANC that what was needed was a new strategy. For this purpose and in preparation for the OAU's ministerial session to be held in April, a meeting of the ANC's Revolutionary Council and the National Executive Committee took place in March 1975 in Morogoro. A study of Tambo's Presidential address to the meeting makes some interesting revelations. In his address, a very demoralised Tambo lamented the poor performance of the ANC. He made reference to the ANC past failures and made a candid reference to the organisation's poor management. His perception that the movement was perhaps still "ill managed, poorly directed and badly led" was not far off the mark. While the mood was no different from the Morogoro Conference of 1969, this meeting I would argue, was an important gathering aimed at plotting the future course. Responding to the new developments in the Southern African region, Tambo emphasised the importance of "restating the objectives" of the struggle. Hence he viewed the forthcoming OAU meeting as one "not about détente," but about the "future of Africa."<sup>36</sup>

It was also the ANC view that since the Portuguese coup had altered the balance of power in Africa, the USA together with other Western powers, South Africa and its allies, had adopted a 'counter-revolutionary offensive.' To neutralise South Africa's diplomatic initiatives in Africa, it recognised the need for a dual pronged approach. Action was needed from international organisations such as the UN and OAU and through the solidarity of the international anti-apartheid network.<sup>37</sup> Again, the ANC saw its salvation in the international realm.

When the ministerial session of OAU ministers began in Dar es Salaam in April 1975, the ANC delegation was led by Oliver Tambo and included Josiah Jele, who was the **then** Head of the Department of International Affairs, Johnny Makatini, the ANC Chief Representative from Algeria, Florence Moposho, from the Woman's department, Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General and Moses Mabhida, then a member of the National Executive. The meeting was opened by Julius Nyerere who made a strong plea for South Africa's isolation, pointing out that the meeting was "not about so-called dialogue or detent with South Africa," but about

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<sup>36</sup> Sechaba. May 1975.

<sup>37</sup> This was part of the Declaration of the National Executive Committee, in Minutes of the NEC, 1975, in Sechaba. May 1975.

“the liberation of Southern Africa.”<sup>38</sup> While the ANC appeared to be placated by this declaration which focused on the movement’s main foreign policy objective of isolating South Africa, it failed to exercise influence on the OAU in other areas. There were three such areas. The first related to the priority accorded to the Namibian and Rhodesian struggles; the second related to the talks between Vorster and Front Line States which the ANC perceived as a blatant ‘betrayal of African interests’; the third related to the ANC’s dissatisfaction with paragraph 20 of the Lusaka Manifesto, which made reference to South Africa as a sovereign State. In spite of these concerns and arguments put forward, the ANC failed to influence the OAU which continued to give its support to the Liberation Committee’s Dar es Salam Declaration which prioritised the struggles of Namibia and Rhodesia.

Again it was the Rhodesian struggle that dominated events in the region after this meeting. In August 1975 the talks between Ian Smith and the liberation movements collapsed. This led to a meeting of the Frontline States in Quelimane, Mozambique in February of the next year during which they acknowledged the failure of attempts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian dilemma. In view of the recognition of the need for a far more effective strategic initiative, it was unanimously agreed to support armed struggle.

The meeting, while not recognized by historians as vital, had enormous international repercussions especially in the US, where it was widely believed that if there was any escalation in the conflict, the role of the Soviet Union would be amplified.<sup>39</sup> It was vital for the United States to intervene in ensuring that a peaceful settlement was implemented.

These changes in the Southern African region had far reaching implications for USA foreign policy. In fact, Scott has argued that these changes in the region, which followed the Portuguese coup as well as the Soviet and Cuban involvements in Angola and Cuba, led to a “complete reorientation of American foreign policy in the region.”<sup>40</sup> It was not surprising then for the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger to begin his African tour in April 1976.

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<sup>38</sup> *Sechaba*. Special Issue. June/July 1975.

<sup>39</sup> This has been discussed in the previous Chapter.

<sup>40</sup> Scott. *Foreign Relations of the ANC*. 140.

After meeting with Nyerere in Dar es Salaam and with Kaunda in Lusaka, he announced his country's full support for majority rule.

### ***USA's Responses to Regional Shifts in Africa***

But what begs scrutiny here is how interested was the USA in Africa. While I briefly alluded to USA's policies towards Africa, especially sub Saharan Africa in the previous chapter, it becomes important to examine the US state's involvement and responses if any, to these regional shifts in the 1970s. Did any of this impact in the ANC's attempts to develop a relationship with that country. Piero Gleijeses in his compelling study, entitled *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976*, drew the spotlight on Cuban involvement in Africa from 1959-1976 and of the former's clash with the USA. In so doing he furnished us with a lucid view of how the USA viewed the African continent and African developments. Using newly released documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, Gleijeses was able to successfully argue that the USA lied about its relationship with the South African state and about events which were to lead to years of chaos and civil war in southern Africa.<sup>41</sup>

Up to 1974, senior US officials were hardly interested in sub-saharan Africa and as demonstrated in the previous chapter, US administrations all leaned towards the White regimes in Africa although they did try to avoid openly antagonizing African governments. This was until the Cubans landed in Angola. Comments by US officials of the period clearly justify my view that there was no real interest in the continent at this point. Larry Devlin was of the opinion that top US officials "weren't really interested in Africa."<sup>42</sup> In fact Gleijeses argued that the lack of interest in Africa "by the US Congress was legendry," thus clearly

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<sup>41</sup> Piero Gleijeses. *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976* (London. University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Having access to new documents Gleijeses demonstrated that US sponsored forces arrived in Angola well in advance of the Cubans dispelling the US view that it backed the 1975 operation which involved the CIA, in reaction to the arrival of about 50 000 Cuban troops. These troops, the US argued, arrived to provide assistance to the Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). See also Witney W. Schneidman. *Engaging Africa: Washington and the fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire* (Lanham, Maryland. University Press of America. 2004), in which he focuses on US policy towards Portugal and Portuguese influence on the African continent in the context of the Cold War.

<sup>42</sup> Larry Devlin was the Africa division's chief of the CIA's directorate of Operations from 1971-1974. See Gleijeses. *Conflicting Missions*. 277.

affirming my arguments from the previous Chapter. Using the case of the appointment of Chairs of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittees, he pointed out that “Africa was the booby prize.” John Kennedy accepted the job of the first chair in May 1959 on the agreement that he would not have to hold any meetings.<sup>43</sup> When Kennedy in his second term as Senator, was approached to Chair the Committee, he asked, “How often does it have to meet?” The response from Carl Macy, the committee’s Chief of Staff was as follows. “As often as you want” to which Kennedy further enquired “and suppose I never want it to meet.” Marcy replied “then it never meets.” And so it was that Kennedy agreed to accept the Chairmanship of the Committee that met only once under him.”<sup>44</sup>

So unless they faced a threat from communism, US administrations were not inclined to care about the continent or about freedom movements such as the ANC.<sup>45</sup> The only two Cold War crisis the US faced in this respect between 1959 and 1975 were those in the Zaire and Angola.<sup>46</sup> Also when the USA considered any Communist threat in the world, it looked for Chinese or Russian involvement. But in Africa it faced Havana both in Zaire and in Angola. There is no evidence to support a view that when the USA took the decision to become involved in Angola, it perceived any Soviet threat there. Perhaps it saw Angola as the opportunity to show the USA’s might in the wake of the Vietnam disaster.<sup>47</sup>

According to Gleijeses, who has documented the conflict in Angola so well, the Russians became involved in Angola “slowly and reluctantly.” In August of 1975, in spite of growing “external” support for the FNLA and UNITA, Russia rejected “Castro’s proposal for the dispatch of Cuban troops.” Confronted by the evidence he concluded that until mid-October 1975 the war remained largely a struggle among Angolans and the MPLA was

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<sup>43</sup> Gleijeses. *Conflicting Missions*. 382.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Mahoney. *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York . Oxford University Press, 1983). 28.

<sup>45</sup> Even US economic interests in sub Saharan Africa were minor. As pointed out by Gleijeses in 1973 US interests amounted to about 4% of total US trade. See 382.

<sup>46</sup> See studies on US involvement in Zaire such as Thomas Odom. *Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964-1965* (Fort Leavenworth. Combat Studies Institute, 1988) and Elise Pachter. “Our Man in Kinshasa: US Relations with Mobutu, 1970-1983.” Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (John Hopkins University, 1987).

<sup>47</sup> See John Stockwell. *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York. W. W. Norton, 1978). Stockwell worked for the CIA for 13 years. In his last two years before he chose to retire, he managed covert operations for the CIA. This study focuses on US covert operations in Angola during the civil war.

winning...then the real power grab began.”<sup>48</sup> Briefly put the result was as follows, South African became an active participant in the conflict through Washington’s goading. With the apartheid state invading Angola, Cuba’s response was to send troops which proved catastrophic for the former which took on a hasty retreat causing further humiliation for the US administration.

What all this demonstrated was that the USA has failed on its image recovery project and even worse that it was collaborating with the apartheid state in destabilizing sub-saharan Africa. Cuba became a factor of concern in USA policies. This was well articulated by Policy Planning Director Winston Lord who in early April of 1976 warned about the “ultimate nightmare” of “Soviet/Cuban intervention in Southern Africa with widespread African support.”<sup>49</sup> Facing this possibility, Kissinger undertook his first official visit to Africa later that month believing that “If the Cubans are involved there, Namibia is next and after that South Africa itself.” Hence he shared with the National Security Council his intention to “identify with African aspiration.”<sup>50</sup> And so it was that the USA’s previous policy of non-interest in the African continent had been reversed. But whether this would prove advantageous to the ANC and other liberation movements had still to be seen.

### ***Regional Challenges for the ANC***

In view of these developments and given the involvement of many major powers on the continent, for Vladimir Shubin it was clear that the African continent “was in a state of flux”, and this spelt further doom for the ANC and its attempts to establish itself internationally as well as isolating South Africa.<sup>51</sup> While the ANC was desperately trying to establish foreign relations with, and seek the support and attention of the countries like the USA, it was experiencing no success even on the African continent. The effects of South

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<sup>48</sup> Gleijeses. *Conflicting Missions*. 390.

<sup>49</sup> Winston Lord to Kissinger, “Strategy for Southern Africa,” (12 April 1976), 2. Box 357. Policy Planning Council (PPS), Policy Planning Staff, Director’s files. RG 59, National Archives.

<sup>50</sup> National Security Council Meeting, 7 April 1976. 13. NSC Minutes Box 2. Gerald R. Ford Library, Ann Arbor.

<sup>51</sup> Shubin. *A View From Moscow* (Cape Town. Mayibuye Books, 1999). 98.

African initiatives such as ‘dialogue’ were tragic for the liberation movements as relations between African countries and the apartheid state continued to grow. Even countries such as Tanzania and Zambia began to feel marginalized by these shifts in policy.

This also probably explains the reasons why MK lost its capacity to operate from Zambia and Tanzania. In Zambia, where the ANC headquarters were located, President Kenneth Kaunda alluded to the “voice of reason for which Africa and the whole world were waiting.”<sup>52</sup> However, the reality was that this African country began to feel the pressure exerted by Pretoria. Several attacks were made on Zambia by agents of the apartheid state. These included the parcel bomb explosion which killed the ANC Deputy Chief Representative, Adolfus Mvemve (John Dube). Many other activists, including Max Sisulu, were wounded and received treatment in a Moscow Hospital.<sup>53</sup> Two issues were apparent—the future of the ANC in Zambia was unpredictable and the relationship between them appeared to be strained.

In 1974, the ANC was instructed by the Zambian authorities not to undertake any attacks against South Africa from Zambian soil. The instruction went even further to request the ANC to cut back on its struggle-related activities. Shubin provided further examples to illustrate attempts by the Zambian authorities to curtail the work of the ANC in Lusaka. He makes reference to a meeting between Tambo and Kaunda that was cancelled at 30 minutes notice. The number of ANC officials at the African Liberation Centre in Lusaka, he pointed out, was scaled down to six people. Also, the right of the ANC Secretary-General to stay in Lusaka was restricted with the proviso that he remain in the country for not more than 90 days per year. Radio Freedom broadcasts from Lusaka were suspended, ANC cadres were placed under surveillance by the Zambian security and there was a demand from the authorities for information regarding ANC members in Zambia.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Sechaba*, No. 5, 1975.

<sup>53</sup> Max Sisulu was the son of Walter Sisulu. He received treatment at the Burdenko Military Hospital in Moscow.

<sup>54</sup> Shubin, *A View From Moscow*, 166

The changes the ANC underwent in its relations with Zambia actually indicate the kind of diplomacy that existed between the South African state and that African country leading up to and after its independence.<sup>55</sup> For Shubin, the “contacts of the independent African states with Pretoria aimed at achieving a settlement in Zambia and Namibia were made at the expense of the ANC.<sup>56</sup> So their response to these developments were predictable as was illustrated at its Morogoro Executive Meeting where it protested at what it considered to be a “smokescreen of...peaceful solution talks.,’ ‘development’, ‘co-operation’, ‘financial aid’ and ‘détente’” in an attempt to “strengthen its defences of the status quo” in South Africa”, while “recruiting allies from among our own anti-imperialist ranks and moving out in a determined bid to break up or sow confusion in the international solidarity movement.”<sup>57</sup>

All of this could also even explain the sudden decision to close the ANC camps in Tanzania, where some members of that country’s leadership treated with suspicion the presence of non-Africans and communists within the ANC. This latter behaviour could also be attributed to the influence of China over Tanzania at this time. So it would appear that since no African country was prepared to house MK, the viable option lay in approaching its only consistent ally, the Soviet Union. In a report presented to the NEC in 1971 it was explained that:

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<sup>55</sup> During the détente discussions between John Vorster and the frontline states of which Zambia was a member, concern was expressed by the ANC and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Samora Machel of Mozambique about the tone of Kenneth Kaunda’s talks although the whole initiative was designed to find a solution to the Southern African conflicts in line with the clauses enshrined in the Lusaka Manifesto. The discussions were guided by a detent document crafted by Zambian and South African officials. In return for offers of economic assistance to Mozambique from South Africa, the document called for assurances from the frontline States that they would not allow freedom movements to use their countries as bases from which to undertake attacks against the apartheid state. While this worried the ANC they were even more perplexed by Kaunda’s call for a ‘moderate’ pro-western administration in Angola and his opposition to Cuban intervention on the side of the MPLA. He was supported in this call by Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana. In fact the Chief of the CIA task force in Angola pointed out that in 1975 South Africans were encouraged by Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA to become involved after he sought the counsel of Kaunda, Houphouet Boigny of the Ivory Coast, Mobutu Se Seseko of Zaire (Congo) and Leopold Senghor of Senegal. See David Martin and Phyllis Johnson. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.138-141. John Stockwell. *In Search of Enemies* (New York. W.W. Norton and Co., 1978). 186. Thomas. *Diplomacy of Liberation*..

<sup>56</sup> Shubin. *A View From Moscow*. 159.

<sup>57</sup> *Unity in Action: A Short History of the African National Congress of South Africa 1912-1982* (Caledonian Press, London). 57-60. This was a publication produced by the ANC itself in London.

In July 1969 our headquarters received a notice requiring the ANC to vacate its military cadres from Kongwa Camp within a period of 14 days....The reason given for this unprecedented notice was that our cadres in Kongwa stayed so long that they had become a security risk to the country....<sup>58</sup>

The Soviet Union seemed the natural option especially since they also harboured serious concerns about the Lusaka manifesto. At the United Nations, the Soviet Delegation argued that the time was not right for dialogue with the apartheid state. It went further to point out that that only way to destroy colonialism and racism was through “concrete and effective action.”<sup>59</sup>

Given the urgency of the deadline, the MK contingent was transported by 18 Russian planes belonging to the Independent Red Banner Special Purpose Air Brigade, from Dr Es Salaam to Simferopol and elsewhere in the USSR. Although it was expected that they would stay in Russia for a short while, the situation dictated that they stay longer as there was no place to which to deploy them. In any event it was even more difficult for the Soviet Union, not only to accommodate them for a longer term than originally expected, but also to provide military training for the contingent of fighters. According to Shubin, it was JB Marks who was tasked with the difficult chore of convincing the political and military commissars in the USSR of the need to keep the cadres in the country for longer than expected. Due to his successful appeal, the cadres remained in the country until 1972 when the problem was resolved. Cadres were either admitted to Soviet Universities, schools or returned to Africa. Algeria offered assistance to the ANC and the attitude of the Tanzanian authorities underwent a significant change as well.<sup>60</sup>

Through the preceding study of the developments on the African continent, together with the analysis of the effects of the *Lusaka Manifesto*, I have demonstrated the importance of the

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<sup>58</sup> Report presented to the NEC 1971. Shubin. “Digging in the Gold Mine: The Mayibuye Centre Archive as a Source on the History of the South African Liberation Movement.” See [http://cssaame.com/issues/19\\_1/6shubin.doc](http://cssaame.com/issues/19_1/6shubin.doc), 4.

<sup>59</sup> Shubin. *A View From Moscow*. 98.

<sup>60</sup> Shubin. *A View From Moscow*, 100.

need for developing new strategy such as the development of a relationship with the USA. The writing was clearly on the wall for the ANC. But on the basis of the evidence presented, it was apparent that the movement did persevere in this direction, in spite of the many obstacles in its path.

### ***Mozambique: A Further Challenge***

In spite of the unending challenges which the ANC confronted on the African continent, it was undeniable that, as pointed out earlier in the discussion, the Portuguese coup in April 1974 brought much hope to the ANC. For with the coup, came independence to Guinea Bissau in September 1974, to Mozambique in June 1975 and to Angola in November 1975. It was clear that the balance of power in the region was undergoing a significant modification, much to the consternation of the South African State which perceived further threats to its security. The reaction came in the form of the new ‘détente’ initiatives.<sup>61</sup>

Even more heartening for the movement was the recognition that one of South Africa’s neighbours was administered by a liberation movement. This perception was reinforced on 25 June 1975, during the independence ceremony, when support for the ANC was expressed by Samora Machel and Frelimo. The ANC delegation to this ceremony, which was led by

Oliver Tambo, was warmly welcomed by thousands of Mozambicans.<sup>62</sup> Machel introduced Tambo as his “friend, comrade and brother in arms” and announced that:

The Mozambican people and the People’s Republic of Mozambique under the leadership of Frelimo will always assume their duty of solidarity with the interests of the South African masses and of all mankind, whatever difficulties they may face.<sup>63</sup>

In spite of such optimism, after independence the ANC’s relationship with the fledgling FRELIMO (Frente de Libertacao de Mozambique) government faced problems leading to

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<sup>61</sup> All these initiatives have been covered in this chapter.

<sup>62</sup> The delegation also included Joe Modise and other NEC members.

<sup>63</sup> *Sechaba*, No. 8, 1975.23.

an eventual break in relations after the signing of the Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique in 1984.<sup>64</sup> The tension resulted from the pragmatic decision taken by FRELIMO not to anger a hostile and powerful South Africa bent on destroying those countries that refused to cooperate.<sup>65</sup> As a result I would argue that the ANC's campaign to win the support of the African countries was still continuing well into the 1980s. In an interview, which Jim Casson of the American Committee on Africa undertook with the ANC's UN Representative, Johnny Makhatini, before he left to take up his new position in Lusaka, the latter outlined the priorities of the new position. He elaborated on the difficult task of "trying to consolidate our relations with African countries, especially key countries." This interview also provided evidence that the French African countries and the Frontline States "privately don't want sanctions, though publicly they support them."<sup>66</sup> But none of these concerns were ever reflected in coverage such as those in official publications like *Sechaba*.

Two months later, Casson pursued conversations with Makhatini on the related issue of the Nkomati Accord. From these conversations it was clear that the tensions between the ANC and Mozambique had increased exponentially. While Makhatini downplayed these tensions

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<sup>64</sup> Fearing what he considered being a "total onslaught" of communism; PW Botha sought a response which he launched in the form of a "total strategy" which resulted in him holding discussions with Samora Machel. The result of this was the Nkomati Accord, signed on 16 March 1984 and which saw both countries agreeing to prevent insurgent movements using their respective countries as bases for attacks on the other. While Mozambique agreed to expel the ANC, South Africa agreed to cease support of RENAMO. See C. Saunders(ed). Readers Digest Illustrated History of South Africa-The Real Story (Cape Town. Readers Digest, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> While the apartheid state assured Mozambique of its support for an African administration, it issued the usual warning of repercussions of allowing insurgent movements to use that country to undertake attacks against SA. So Mozambique was really under pressure to be a cooperative neighbour, thus compelling Machel to discreetly curtail the ANC's activities from the country in return for Pretoria's agreement to cease support of RENAMO, the other local resistance rebel group opposing FRELIMO. See *The Economist*. "Mozambique: Tit For Tat". 27 June 1981. 39.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Johnny Makhatini by Jim Casson of the American Committee on Africa. New York. January 1984. Makatini was the Director of the Department of International Affairs for the ANC in Lusaka. Taking up a position in the ANC's office in Algeria in 1963, together with Robert Resha, he was responsible for elevating the movement's status in the Algerian region. In 1966 he became Resha's successor in Algeria and thereafter became well known in the circles of the OAU and UN. In view of his recognition in international circles, the ANC appointed him as its head of the ANC Mission to the UN. While there he developed relationships with representatives of foreign governments as well as with international organisations. But more importantly he developed a meaningful and special relationship with the thousands of US activists. After 1985 he was transferred to Lusaka to devote his attention to the International Department. *Sechaba*. Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 1989). Copy of interview in possession of author, provided courtesy of Thomas Karis. See Folder 4.

pointing out that while there had been “setbacks and victories in the past,” the ANC remained “committed to the close relations it had with Mozambique.” Yet in the same conversation he lamented the fact that the ANC had not been given the opportunity to advise or influence Mozambique on its decision to seek dependent longer term economic ties with South Africa. Evidence has pointed to this being a regular occurrence in the past on the part of other African states. For example, the ANC was invited to a meeting of the Frontline States in Luanda in April 1977. At the post summit press conference Tambo communicated the ANC’s pleasure at being actually invited to the meeting, using this opportunity to voice the unhappiness of the ANC at being left out in the past. He went on to question Frontline strategy which saw even Vorster being involved in consultations whereas “leaders of the people he oppresses” were not involved in these discussion.<sup>67</sup> This was a noteworthy observation.

While Casson drew attention to the fact that in February of that year, the Lusaka Office of the ANC issued a statement of concern for being excluded from consultations or briefings of SA-Mozambique discussions, Makhatini explained that Tambo was eventually informed. But he explained that this happened only after the meeting had taken place between the South African delegation comprising of PW Botha, Magnus Malan and Louis Le Grange and Mozambique. All these developments, Makhatini admitted, would “make our campaign for the total isolation of the regime more difficult.”<sup>68</sup>

What is interesting is how other organizations viewed Mozambique’s actions. What I consider to be key evidence on the volatile dynamics that characterized the region during the 1970s-180s can be found in publications such as *Apdusa News*. In its publication of May 1984, it tried to justify Mozambique’s actions by explaining that the latter was compelled to enter into this agreement with the apartheid state because she was not getting “the promised or expected economic and military from her ‘socialist allies,’” and this meant “denying the ANC a base in Mozambique”. So it would appear that there was certainly a degree of

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<sup>67</sup> Sechaba. Fourth Quarter. 1977. “ANC President Explains the Struggle.” 7-14.

<sup>68</sup> Interview by Jim Casson and Richard Knight of the American Committee on Africa with Makhatini. New York, 18 March 1984. Transcript in possession of author. Courtesy of Thomas Karis. Folder 4.

disappointment with countries such as those in the Soviet Bloc, including the Soviet Union which was “its newly acquired ally” after Mozambique turned its back on “its principal ally, China.”<sup>69</sup>

But perhaps the most enlightening evidence I have uncovered on Nkomati and its effects was an unsigned memorandum entitled ‘Some questions pertaining to the Frontline States/Liberation movements’ discussion on the Strategy for the Liberation of South Africa’, and dated 15 August 1984. According to Gail Gerhart, in whose possession this document found itself, the document was drafted by a committee which included Pallo Jordan, Siphon Makana, Mac Maharaj, and Thabo Mbeki—all of whom were tasked by Oliver Tambo to draft a memorandum for the Arusha meeting where the devastating effects of Nkomati were expected to merit intense scrutiny.

The memo, which listed 43 points or questions for the NEC to ponder, carried with it a dispassionate yet pragmatic tone, lacking the usual struggle rhetoric that was evident in many internal ANC documents and literature. This meant that the ANC was seriously considering its strategic options as far back as 1984. Yet it was a vital piece of evidence that demonstrated what internal ANC thinking was about Nkomati.<sup>70</sup> For Thabo Mbeki, events such as Nkomati justified the need for ‘self reliance’, as “in the past we have overestimated the extent to which we could get outside support.” He went further to point to the “need to take a more realistic, objective position and know that we are to depend a great deal on our own ingenuity.”<sup>71</sup>

Hence what emerged was that the ANC was suffering the devastating effects of the Accord. Many of the options considered undeniably lay outside the usual possibilities or strategies

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<sup>69</sup> See *Apdusa News*. Vol. 5. No. 2, May 1984. “What of the Nkomati Accord.” This journal was first published in 1984 and saw itself as the ‘watchdog’ of the majority of the oppressed. It was affiliated to the New Unity Movement which was the successor of the Non-European Unity Movement.

<sup>70</sup> H72. “Some Questions Pertaining to the Frontline States/Liberation of Movements Discussion on the Strategy for the Liberation of South Africa.” Discussion Memorandum. 15 August 1984. Karis-Gerhart Collection. Wits University, Folder 56.

<sup>71</sup> *Washington Post* (16 April 1984), in Mark Gervisser. *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2007). 490.

that the movement may have considered. These included options to back away from the Soviet Union and to pursue more friendly relations with the West; to “assert the independence and vanguard role of the ANC” in relation to the alliance between the ANC and the SACP; the “form that negotiations (with South Africa) should take”; and whether there “should be a coordinated approach to the liberation struggles of Namibia and South Africa.” What was also apparent from this document was that the ANC had serious concerns about the *Lusaka Manifesto*, the effects of which I interrogated earlier in the chapter, pondering the extent to which Africa “as a whole was bound by the provisions” of the manifesto. A final option that merits mention is that which placed importance on the need to “promote the diplomatic struggle.”<sup>72</sup>

The value of this document to my arguments and to my work lies not simply in its ability to showcase the effects of the Nkomati Accord on the ANC and its activities, but more significantly it finds resonance with my themes of the ANC as a vigorous agent of change and not as passive victims. I also find it important to testify that the document points to the practical realities which the ANC considered as a means of achieving its goals, even if it meant abandoning seminal codes of decades gone by. By interrogating new policy options which clashed head on with historical beliefs, the movement as well as individuals such as Mbeki demonstrated that they were boldly ready to forge ahead at any cost to secure South Africa’s freedom. However while this piece of evidence pointed to the ANC considering a negotiated settlement as early as 1984, Gervisser has gone even further to provide evidence that consideration for such a settlement could be traced back to 1980 and the Lancaster House Agreement-and the informant of this vital piece was Thabo Mbeki.<sup>73</sup>

So it was not all doom and gloom. Relations with other countries in the Southern African region began to gradually improve. This was evident in Lesotho and Swaziland-although the establishment of such relationships was not without many problems.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Document H72. “Some Questions pertaining to the Frontline States/Liberation movements’ discussion on the Strategy for the liberation of South Africa”.

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed explanation of this evidence and the importance of the Lancaster House Agreement, see Gervisser. *Thabo Mbeki*. 491,492.

<sup>74</sup> The ANC set up its underground machinery in Lesotho. But by 1975, the Lesotho Security Services harassed the movement. Chris Hani and his assistants were detained and brutalised by the security apparatus as they

### ***The ANC and Angola***

From the 1960s the ANC enjoyed a cordial relationship with the MPLA and this relationship endured for many years. On 4 February 1975, an ANC delegation which included ANC and SACP members such as Ruth Mompati and Moses Mabhida, was sent to Luanda to commemorate the anniversary of armed struggle and to celebrate the triumphant return to the capital of Agostino Neto.<sup>75</sup> The success of this relationship was guided by Angola's support of the ANC strategy that the struggles for liberation in Southern Africa could not be separated from one another. On 4 February 1976, an International Solidarity Conference was held in Luanda, the organization of which involved the ANC which also played a crucial role in the international campaign to secure support for the MPLA and the People's Republic of Angola. The ANC delegation to this conference was headed by Johnny Makatini. This relationship with Angola had severe repercussions for the ANC's relationship with Zambia, who, at that time, supported UNITA. As pointed out by Shubin, this was a peculiar situation-to have the ANC headquarters in a country which gave support to the ANC's enemy.<sup>76</sup> As alluded to earlier in my discussion, the relationship between Zambia and the ANC had been strained due to the pressures exerted by the apartheid state on the former.

Since the Angolan Government viewed the ANC as a faithful friend of the struggle as well as against future South African aggression, it conveyed its willingness to host an ANC office and to assist in the training of MK cadres. As a result of such agreements, an ANC training camp was developed in the country. By February 1976, it had become evident to the movement that Angola could become a dependable base. With this realization came the decision to train all MK fighters in Angola and that only specialized training would be

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began to set up underground structures. Authorities in that country were suspicious of money provided to Hani for the setting up of this structure. They believed that the finances made available were to be used by the opposition Basutoland Congress Party. In Swaziland, the ANC experienced similar problems. While the King supported the work of the movement, officials in his government remained suspicious of the ANC. As a result of this, the ANC experienced difficulties such as the detention of Thabo Mbeki. Problems in Zimbabwe were documented by David Martin and Phyllis Johnson. "Destabilisation and Dependence." In Mark A. Uhlig. *Apartheid in Crisis* (Middlesex. Penguin Books, 1986).

<sup>75</sup> Sechaba. May 1975 "Report from Angola." 23.

<sup>76</sup> Shubin. A View From Moscow. 163.

undertaken in Russia as well as other friendly countries.<sup>77</sup> The ANC's office in Luanda was opened in April 1977 by Joe Slovo and Cassius Make who was the then Deputy-Secretary of the Revolutionary Council of the movement. There is no doubt that that these encouraging developments in Angola were inextricably linked to Cuba. After all, the ANC enjoyed close ties with Havana. This was strengthened when Tambo visited Havana in October 1977 with the view to finalizing Cuba's role in South Africa's liberation struggle, with specific reference no doubt to the training of cadres.<sup>78</sup> A year later Alex La Guma opened the ANC's office in Havana.<sup>79</sup>

### **Conclusion**

While documents such as the *Lusaka Manifesto* and the *African Strategy in Southern Africa*, may have outwardly sounded the death knell for the liberation struggle waged by the African National Congress, and its attempts to gain recognition from the USA, other documents such the *Thabo Mbeki* memorandum clearly allow me to conclude that the ANC would not allow its work to be undermined by developments on the African continent. Hence it was able during the period under review, to successfully manoeuvre its ways through these obstacles and gain some recognition in the US and finally in the African region. Though not significant, the competition for the heart and soul of the people of the United States of American people was beginning to yield some results as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. However a catalyst was needed to fully catapult the African National Congress into the international arena and the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of the Reagan administration was able to do just that.

At the same time I can argue that while this period was one of protracted struggle for the ANC on the African continent, it was a temporary setback that was reversed by August 21 1989 when the Harare Declaration was adopted. At the same time I cannot resist the urge to

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<sup>77</sup> Shubin makes this claim on the basis of his discussions held with Thomas Nkobi and Alfred Nzo in Moscow on 3 February 1976.

<sup>78</sup> "Cuba Help Sought". *London Times* (17 October 1977).

<sup>79</sup> La Guma was a South African author and influential member of the SACP. For establishment of missions see also *Sechaba*. Fourth Quarter. 1978. 63; Tikly. "ANC External Wing." Pfister. "Gateway to International Victory."

point out that this was a mere year before the unbanning of the movement back home. While I am not understating the African contribution to the liberation struggle of South Africa and do quite decidedly declare that the Declaration was a step in ensuring that African unity against apartheid was restored and that the ANC finally recognized as the dominant representative of the oppressed people of South Africa, the road to this moment was a trying and disappointing one indeed.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> At the insistence of the ANC, an Ad Hoc Committee on Southern Africa of the OAU adopted this declaration at its meeting in Harare in 1989. It recognised that “a conjuncture of circumstances exists which, if there is a demonstrable readiness on the part of the Pretoria regime to engage in negotiations genuinely and seriously, could create the possibility to end apartheid through negotiations.” It then outlined the principles for such negotiations. [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/oau/Harare.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/oau/Harare.html).

## *Chapter Four*

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### **THE IRONIES OF THE SO-CALLED 'LIBERAL ERA' IN USA POLITICS: THE ANC FROM CARTER AND YOUNG TO REAGAN**

#### **Abstract**

*Following up from a previous Chapter which explored the policy of different US administrations towards the ANC and South Africa's freedom struggle, this Chapter will focus on developments during the Carter and Reagan years. The former administration which began on a high note for the ANC, produced so little of substance in terms of delivering a suitable agenda for contact with liberation organisations such as the ANC. This is the central theme of this study of the Carter era. The roles of those such as Andrew Young, the first African US Ambassador to the United Nations, will be scrutinised with a view to demonstrating his ineffectiveness in furthering the African cause and the disappointment the ANC suffered as a result of his actions. As the Soweto Uprising preceded the Carter Presidency I considered it appropriate to address the issue of the effects of the Soweto uprising on the US state, using a body of evidence to argue that the uprising did not influence the USA state during Carter and Reagan's tenure, towards conciliatory actions such as according some recognition to the ANC. In regards to the Reagan years, I will argue that it was only during the second tenure of this USA President that the light began to appear at the end of the tunnel for the ANC. This was demonstrated through the passing of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) and the high level Shultz- Tambo meeting in January 1987. But that such encouraging developments in the ANC's attempts to build a relationship with the state apparatus in Washington occurred while changes in the Soviet Union's domestic scene were taking place compels me to thoroughly explore changes introduced as a result of Perestroika-changes that acted to adversely affect the ANC's long standing relationship with a loyal ally. While the international anti-apartheid scene the late 1980's indicated the presence of a solid programme of solidarity with the ANC from countries in Western Europe, South America, Canada, Africa and Asia, this was not the case in the Soviet Union. Evidence from Vladimir Shubin and Daniel R.*

*Kempton corroborate this view.<sup>1</sup> It is not my intention, as I have done with my study of administrations preceding the Carter era, as well as the Carter administration itself, to undertake an in-depth study of the Reagan years, its actions and its officials as much of this will be interrogated in the final chapter. This era merits scrutiny as a mechanism to demonstrate how the ANC succeeded in breaking through the most belligerent administration. A further area that I will focus on will be the various educational opportunities that opened up to South Africans during the Reagan era as a strategy of co-opting support from Black South Africans for the USA vision, thus demonstrating that an unprecedented number of Black South Africans, including many activists took advantage of such opportunities. In regard to the Reagan era, especially the second term, this chapter will demonstrate that all these developments grew out of new diplomatic manoeuvres aimed at facilitating the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.*

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In Chapter Two I have argued that for the ANC there appeared to be no positive developments to look forward to in regards to US policy. But this was true until Jimmy Carter became President of the United States of America in 1977. What is significant about the Carter Presidency is that it gave hope to the liberation movement. As early as the 1976 election preparation phase, Carter ensured that African Affairs featured prominently and this encouraged the leaders of the ANC. It was therefore reasonably expected that this presidency would bring a breath of new vigour to ANC/USA relations. But events and actions during the Carter Presidency will provide evidence showing that this was not to be for Carter and Young were compelled to cave in to national interests and hence follow the path taken by their predecessors.

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<sup>1</sup> In his study Shubin acknowledged rather reluctantly, and with a strong voice of condemnation that the late 1980s saw Gorbachev gravitate closer to the West and to consultation with South Africa's racist state. This meant disentangling itself from support for liberation movements such as the ANC. All of these initiatives were driven by economic considerations. In the same vein, Kempton argues that the Soviet Union changed its model of support, adopted from the 1940s to the 1970s to provide high levels of assistance in return for "an exclusive supplier" relationship, to one of abandonment of liberation movements in the 1980s, driven by the need to prevent economic collapse of the Soviet Union. This was the rationale for the former ally of the Soviet Union pushing for a negotiated settlement of the South African dilemma in the late 1980s. See Vladimir Shubin. [A View from Moscow](#) (Cape Town. Mayibuye Books, 1999) and Daniel R. Kempton. [Soviet Strategy Toward Southern Africa: The National Liberation Movement Connection](#) (New York. Praeger, 1989). 165.

### ***Developments in the Carter Era: A High Note***

As presidential candidate Carter was also aware of the growing interest of the African American community in US policy towards Africa.<sup>2</sup> Using Vietnam to draw an important historical parallel, he called for the black community to take a more active role on African issues pointing out the value to the US nation “if people in public life were to be made aware of the problems of Africa through a significant Black interest in Africa.” He believed that “Americans might not have made the mistakes we made in Vietnam had there been an articulate Vietnamese minority in our midst.”<sup>3</sup>

The high priority accorded, though unusual and unlike in the Kennedy administration, to African affairs could be attributed to the key staff members that comprised the Carter Team. Although Carter himself had little knowledge of Africa, many of his appointees and advisors were well informed on events in southern Africa and the problems resulting from white minority rule. Ruth Schacter Morgenthau, a respected Africanist, became the advisor to the UN Social and Economic Council. Andrew Young, a former aide to Martin Luther King Jr., was appointed as US Ambassador to the UN. Goler Butcher, a black lawyer, went on to head the Africa section of the Agency for International Development (AID). Butcher called for a new policy of “providing no new support to the minority and of ending present support, while providing all the appropriate support to the majority and those working for change.”<sup>4</sup> Even Carter’s foreign policy advisor, Soviet expert, Zbigniew Brzezinski, acknowledged it would be detrimental to the US “to position itself as the ultimate shield of the remnants of white supremacy in Africa at a time when racial equality is coming to be accepted as an imperative norm.”<sup>5</sup>

Aside from the expertise of Carter’s team on African issues, there were related events that encouraged the ANC. These included the increasing involvement of prominent African-Americans in the fight against apartheid, an area which will be explored in detail in Chapter V, and was seen in the calling of the Black Leadership Conference on

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<sup>2</sup> He indicated that he reached this conclusion through his campaigns where he was questioned extensively by African-Americans about Africa. He was not far off the mark especially when one considers the evidence furnished by scholars such as Penny Marie von Eschen, Nikhil Pal Singh and Michelle Anne Stephens as interrogated in Chapter One of this study.

<sup>3</sup> *Africa Report* (May/June 1976). 20

<sup>4</sup> *Africa Report* (January/February 1977). 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Kevin Danaher. *The Political Economy of US Policy Toward South Africa* (London. Westview Press, 1985). 139.

Southern Africa by the Congressional Black Caucus in September 1976, just months after the Soweto uprising. This meeting which brought together 120 representatives from organizations such as the NAACP, Africare, Operation PUSH, the Black Economic Research Centre and the National Council of Negro Women, had delivered on an important product-the African-American Manifesto. The importance of this document lay in its commitment to move its mandate further than the Democratic Party's platform by announcing its support for armed struggle by the liberation movements and for any initiatives undertaken by these organizations to seek aid from any source available.<sup>6</sup> Also after NSSM 39, this was clearly a breath of fresh air for the African liberation movements like the ANC.

Another encouraging development was the incorporation in 1977 of the newly formed organization Transafrica, which emerged as the African-American lobbying organization for Africa and the Caribbean under the leadership of Randall Robinson.<sup>7</sup> For this organization, its most "responsive pressure point" in the policy making process was the House Sub-Committee on Africa. In 1980, Robinson had many meetings with President Carter and the Secretary of State. That these positive developments were short term ones was clear when presented with evidence which show the eventual turn taken by the administration on its Africa policy. It also became obvious that the African-American constituency still remained a minor voice in their country's African policy.<sup>8</sup> But this was only a temporary one as the situation began to change in the mid 1980s.

Within two weeks of his inauguration, the Carter administration embarked on a strategy to review US policy on Southern Africa. National Security Advisor, Brzezinski called for the compilation of Policy Review Memorandum No. 4. In this regard, President Carter

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<sup>6</sup> The Democratic Party Platform committed the party to policies that granted recognition to Africa and its development, permitted greater involvement by the African-American constituency in foreign policy issues and decisions related to the African continent and increased aid to Africa. The platform further endorsed the principle of majority rule for countries suffering under minority oppression. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/aam/afroamericanmanifesto.html>. The significance of this document and its specific points are also covered here, under "The African-American Manifesto on Southern Africa, 1976".

<sup>7</sup> In 1980, Transafrica had 10 000 members. Its membership was broadly representative of black opinion on Africa. Members included those from groups such as elected officials, academics and other professionals who were considered to be specialists on Africa, religious leaders and other observers who had a keen interest in Africa and the Caribbean. Interview with M. Munthali at Transafrica

<sup>8</sup> The role of the African-Americans and their struggle to apply adequate pressure against the USA state, including the work of Transafrica will be interrogated in Chapter IV.

signed a 'Presidential Directive', which included the following distinctions:

- The problem of Southern Africa should receive urgent action.
- Because the continuation of guerrilla war equates with growing Soviet influence, the US must strongly affirm a commitment to peaceful solutions in southern Africa.
- It is important for the US to cooperate with European and African allies in developing its initiatives.
- The administration will need to take 'visible steps' to distance the US from the apartheid regime unless there is noticeable movement towards power sharing in South Africa and
- If the US government does not speak out strongly against apartheid there will be a considerable loss of credibility with African states and the rest of the third world.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Carter's Challenges***

While this may be considered a very encouraging development, these distinctions were a tall order given the track record of previous administrations. One is also reminded at this point of the lessons of Nixon's National Security Memorandum 39, which were crafted and implemented barely seven years before this. This view is strengthened by the experiences of Andrew Young, the new ambassador to the UN, who was to confront the real onslaught of conservative forces in Washington. A day after Carter named Young, his close friend, to be Ambassador, he was invited to join Leslie Harriman, the Nigerian ambassador to the UN, Jesse Jackson from Operation PUSH and William Cotter of the African American Institute on the Public Television Service programme, *The MacNeil-Lehrer Report*. During the course of the programme he was reminded that it was he who at one time referred to this position as a "suicidal job." He admitted that he used that description in the past, but that his perception had changed as he was confident that

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<sup>9</sup> *Africa Confidential* (19 August 1977), 1-2. The fact that Carter's policies were reported in this publication clearly allows us to understand that impact of his views on the left readership in South Africa which now appeared encouraged while the world was now forced to consider the seriousness of this issue.

“American foreign policy toward South Africa had changed with the election of Jimmy Carter.” Two key questions were then put to him by Lehrer.

- “On the United States role in Africa, are you going to be involved in defining what that role is rather than just going to the UN and saying what it is?  
And
- “On the issue of moving the nation towards a resolution of the constant friction between the United States position and the Third World position in the UN, can you move our nation?”

To both questions, Young provided positive responses indicating that he was confident of accomplishing the goals inherent in those questions. Perhaps at that stage he was too naïve to acknowledge that in fact there were other interests in Washington who would, in the final analysis, determine foreign policy.<sup>10</sup>

And so it was that within weeks of his new appointment, Young was hastily sent to the African continent to convey the new initiatives and trends in Washington’s African policy. More importantly, Young’s intention was to revive Kissinger’s failed attempts at reaching a solution to the Rhodesian dilemma.<sup>11</sup> The results of his endeavours were not very positive as the Presidents of the Frontline states indicated their reluctance allow the US to take on any significant role in Southern Africa. Given the US track record in terms of its African policy, this reluctance came as no surprise. As if difficulties with the African leaders were not enough, Young already began to face intense pressure from the conservative quarter in the capital. As the ambassador prepared to depart for Africa, the US State Department undertook a number of key manoeuvres aimed at sabotaging the new African policy, which Carter tried to implement.

On the day of Young’s departure for Tanzania a report, purported to be deliberately leaked by ‘US intelligence sources’ referred to Cuban military advisors who it was alleged, arrived in Tanzania to train Zimbabwean guerrillas. This report clearly disturbed the ambassador whose intention it was to dissociate US policy from the cold war by

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<sup>10</sup> *MacNeil-Lehrer Report*. Public Television Service. Radio-TV Monitoring Service Inc. 17 December 1976.

<sup>11</sup> His key meetings were with Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Agostinho Neto of Angola and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. These leaders carried the greatest influence over the liberation movements of Zimbabwe.

according little emphasis to the presence of the Cubans or Soviets in Southern Africa. This was evident in his observation that “one of the most wholesome things about our administration is that ...it won't be paranoid about communism.”<sup>12</sup> This strategy also drew much criticism from his country's ally across the Atlantic. According to a report in the *Seattle Post* people in the British government as well as in political and diplomatic circles were appalled by the statements which the newly appointed ambassador had been making about the Southern African situation. His remarks before the Foreign Relations Committee, on television and in interviews that Cuban troops have brought “stability and order” to Angola, that “there is no reason to be concerned if militant black Marxists gain control of Rhodesia and South Africa and that communism has never been a threat to him” were received in London with shock. The report went further to allege that these statements had already caused the first quarrel in the American cabinet, putting Young at loggerheads with Zbigniew Brzezinski, the new Director of the National Security Council.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile it was not surprising that while still in Africa, his attempts should suffer further harm when the *New York Times* published a headline story with a shocking title which read ‘7 White Missionaries in Rhodesia Slain in Raid by Black Guerrillas.’<sup>14</sup> However, the story left out many important facts. Regardless of these manoeuvres Young continued with his attempts to sell his country's new Africa policy to key African leaders. What is interesting about these visits is the agreement by Nigerian Head of State, Lt. General Olusegan Obasanjo to meet with Young, this after refusing Kissinger the opportunity on three occasions to visit his country. This was heartening for relations between these two countries.<sup>15</sup>

Developments in 1977 took on a new turn when Vice President of the Carter administration, Walter Mondale met with John Vorster in Vienna from the 19-20 May.

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<sup>12</sup> *Baltimore Sun* (6 February 1977). “Kaunda asks US Role In Africa”.

<sup>13</sup> *Seattle Post* (30 January 1977).

<sup>14</sup> *New York Times* (8 February 1979). However the report failed to add that there was no evidence to prove who committed the crime. The Catholics were known to enjoy good relations with the Patriotic Front. A special black unit of government troops were known to masquerade as guerrilla forces, **carrying out** atrocities as a means of discrediting the latter.

<sup>15</sup> The Nigerians had opposed the US role in Angola and Zimbabwe. For Carter a good relationship with Nigeria was necessary since the latter had considerable influence in the community of African nations and it had considerable economic importance as well. Obasanjo's agreement to meet with **Young** was encouraging for Carter. Hence Young was successful in this exercise.

This meeting was important because it represented the first senior level contact between the new American administration and the apartheid state. Regrettably, not much is known about what transpired at this meeting. But the press conference given by Mondale was enough to get a sense of the discussions that took place behind closed doors. He admitted that there was “a fundamental and profound disagreement between the two governments” and warned that South African obstinacy was the “surest incentive to increase Soviet influence and even racial war.”<sup>16</sup> According to Mondale, a strong message was conveyed to Vorster that should their repressive policies lead to racial conflict with the majority, the US would not come to the rescue of the white minority—even if the conflict resulted in intervention by the communist countries. Mondale had just two demands for Vorster: the ending of racial discrimination and the “*full* participation by all of its citizens on an equal basis.”<sup>17</sup> The final demand raised intense interest in the press who pressed the Vice President for further details. The exchange on this issue was an enlightening one and went as follows:

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, could you possibly go into slightly more details on your concept of full participation as opposed to one-man-one-vote? Do you see some kind of compromise?

ANSWER: No, no. It's the same thing. Every citizen should have the right to vote and every vote should be heavily weighted.

This confirmation surprised the international press as it illustrated that this was the first time that any US official of such seniority ventured into demanding democratic change in South Africa. Reacting to what was considered to be a faux pas, and to rapidly undertake some damage control, State Department spokesman, Hodding Carter furnished an obvious and quick retraction. He did this by pointing out that the US was not really demanding one-man-one vote in South Africa. All the administration was calling for was “steps” in the direction of democratic reform. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance confirmed that “we did not demand one-man-one-vote tomorrow.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* (30 May 1977). 31.

<sup>17</sup> Colin Legum. *The Western Crisis over Southern Africa*. (New York. Africana Publications, 1979). 252.

<sup>18</sup> *South African Digest* (1 July 1977). 21. The *South African Digest* was a publication of the South African government. Hence its evidence was predictable.

For my research all of these statements really represented a contradiction in terms which the different US officials failed to confront. While Ambassador Young was trying to market a new image for his country's policy in Africa, his countrymen in the state department were furiously contradicting one another. Although claiming that they were moving further from the Kissinger policy of proceeding delicately with South Africa in return for that country's favourable cooperation on Rhodesia, they continued to emphasise that reform should come gradually. They proceeded further to add that while the administration was searching for progress on any one of the three areas (Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa), it did not expect such progress to happen all at once. Moreover the approach preferred "is still one of reform by the white rulers at the top, assisted by selected Blacks, in opposition to the radical programmes of the African Liberation."<sup>19</sup>

At the risk of courting criticism for any impudence, I would point out that Young's efforts were half-baked and futile. To say the least, he was a disappointment to the ANC and too many in the movement, including the solidarity groups in the US. Young did not enjoy much success nor did he display any real understanding of the dilemmas of the African continent. This was most evident during his attendance of the United Nations conference in Maputo, Mozambique. He failed to satisfy expectations of liberation movement representatives who expected him to refer to the action that the US would take to support the course of liberation movements.<sup>20</sup> Considering that this was one of the first addresses Young had given in the region, in the presence of a predominantly African audience, he neglected to use the opportunity to market his brief while securing the support of African leaders. Instead he presented a 30-minute sermon on the civil rights struggle in his country. Namibia was hardly mentioned.

In regard to Zimbabwe he proposed that the liberation movement should turn away from armed struggle and focus instead on non-violent boycott strategies as mechanisms to end white rule. He went further to point out that international arms embargoes and economic sanctions would be futile. It came as no surprise that his speech did not go

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<sup>19</sup> *Southern Africa* (June/July 1977). 14.

<sup>20</sup> This conference was held to show support for the Namibian and Zimbabwean struggles. Before Young's arrival, Carter in a television interview warned that tough action would be taken against South Africa in the United Nations if the former failed to take steps to end the illegal occupation of Namibia. "Carter Asks End to White Rule in South West Africa". *New York Times* (18 May 1977). See also Andrew De Roche. *Andrew Young: A Biography* (New York. Drake, 1978).

down well with participants who were highly critical of his visit. These included Robert Mugabe who drew Young's attention to his ignorance of the Zimbabwean struggle. Further criticism came from the Nigerian ambassador and Chairperson of the UN committee against Apartheid, Leslie Harriman. He was annoyed by the Ambassador's remarks adding that "we are not talking about improving the lot of Africans...we are talking about liberation."<sup>21</sup> There was a noted difference in views from his earlier interview with Lehrer. That Young lacked the political will to stand up to those other interests in Washington was clear.

Perhaps I am being too harsh on Young. Living in the USA in the 1980s activists and many involved in ANC activities remained scathing about the ineffectiveness of Young. But now with the benefit of hindsight and with free access to evidence not available before, I am inclined to temper my criticism and instead argue that Young was a prisoner of his time and of the politics of Washington. In fact the circumstances of his appointment were significant in understanding his limitations in carrying through on the liberal stances initially proposed by his President. At a press conference in March 1977 where Carter introduced Young, he alluded to the reasons for the appointment, explaining that "the Third World nations now look on the United States as having at least one representative...who understands their problems, who speaks their language."<sup>22</sup> This permits the argument that his mandate was really to secure support from Third World leaders, especially those in Africa for Carter's agendas on the continent and internationally. *The Sunday Times of London* also felt free to make its own assessment of the appointment, alerting its readers to Young's actual brief which "was to restrain Black American militancy, to buy time until American arm twisting of South Africa begins to produce results."<sup>23</sup>

Further expositions on American policy were discerned during a speech made by Secretary of State Vance during the annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Three important points emerged from this exposition, firstly that "reactive American policy that seeks only to oppose Soviet or

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<sup>21</sup> *Southern Africa* (June/July 1977). 9.

<sup>22</sup> Used by Dr. George Wright in his commentary entitled "A Black Man as President of the United States! What's Going On? Why Barack Obama might become President," in *The Black Commentator* (21 February 2008) Issue 265 3. <http://www.blackcommentator.com>. This is an online magazine that focuses purely on matters of interest to African-Americans.

<sup>23</sup> See George Wright. *Black Commentator*.

Cuban involvement in Africa would be both dangerous and futile.” Secondly, a long term approach was favoured “that would depend more on our actual assistance to African development than on manoeuvres for short term diplomatic advantage.” The third point focused on the assumption that “US policy should recognize and encourage African nationalism” for “if we try to impose American solutions for African problems, we may sow division among the Africans and undermine their ability to oppose efforts at domination by others.”<sup>24</sup> This address to the NAACP provided the Carter administration with yet another opportunity to issue a warning to Pretoria that its relationship with the US would “inevitably suffer” unless South Africa began moving towards the democratic route. But this did not happen.

### ***South African State Responses to the Carter Presidency***

The Mondale meeting as well as the NAACP address did not go down well with Vorster who believed that pressure from the Americans could be met well ahead by the South African state, warning that Carter’s policy can “only lead to one thing as I see it—namely to chaos and anarchy in southern Africa.” Instead of making the changes required by the Carter administration, Vorster began unleashing the full might of the apartheid state on resistance activity. But before doing so, he embarked on reforms of a sinister nature. He unveiled his plans for the establishment of “three full-fledged parliaments, one each for whites, coloureds and Indians, each with its own prime minister, cabinet and assembly.”<sup>25</sup> In spite of the justifications for this new plan, it did nothing to change the realities attached to the apartheid structures. If anything, this ‘new’ structure was nothing short of being purely racial and was negatively received by black South Africans.

As was usually the case, South African authorities adopted the regular strategy used to react to international criticism or threats-petulance. This was evidenced by Prime Minister Vorster’s verbal attacks on the Carter administration, as well as by inappropriate actions such as the dissolving of parliament in late September and the announcement of early parliamentary elections to be held on 30 November 1977. When he made this announcement, Vorster emphatically stated that this step was aimed at showing the American officials that his party’s resistance to international pressure and foreign

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<sup>24</sup> Wright. *Black Commentator*. 168.

<sup>25</sup> *South African Digest*. (26 August 1977). 1.

interference had the support of the minority electorate. And sure enough, the National Party increased its majority to an unprecedented level.

On the domestic front the late 70s witnessed a massive crackdown by apartheid police, which was detrimental to the efforts of the liberation movements such as the ANC as well as to South Africa's oppressed majority. The situation was exacerbated by the death in custody of Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko which resulted in further repressive action such as a massive crackdown on the opposition.<sup>26</sup> Eighteen African organisations were declared illegal, 40 black leaders were arrested, 7 white opposition figures were banned and two African newspapers-*The World* and *The Weekend World* were closed down and their editors arrested.

The international community reacted with shock and condemnation at such actions. The UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim expressed regret at the fact that "Biko suffered constant persecution, imprisonment and stringent restrictions, but was never convicted of any offence even under the arbitrary South African laws." Interesting enough, while many speakers in the General assembly brought back their call for an arms embargo and an isolation of the apartheid regime, it is alleged that Ambassador Young remained indifferent and ineffective and made no effort to address the gathering.<sup>27</sup> That he succumbed to the 'old boys club' of Washington was obvious.

### ***International Responses to South African Events***

Events in the UN were a clear indication of international responses to the apartheid state's actions. Members of the Security Council-Libya, Benin, Mauritius-submitted three draft resolutions in October 1977 calling for the following: a comprehensive ban on all military aid to South Africa, an end to all nuclear cooperation and the limiting of foreign investment and trade with Pretoria. But when these resolutions came up for the vote, together with a fourth resolution which called for a condemnation of apartheid, containing no punitive measures, the US, Britain and France "approved a non-substantive resolution," but exercised a triple veto to block all the other resolutions. According to Kevin Danaher, this was the fourth time in UN history that the western

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<sup>26</sup> Steve Biko was the leader of South Africa's Black Consciousness Movement.

<sup>27</sup> *New York Times* (24 September 1977). "South African Leader Eulogised at UN as Symbol of Black Hope."

permanent members of the Security Council exercised a triple veto and on each occasion it was over South Africa, while for many observers these vetoes clearly demonstrated the falsity of US policy.<sup>28</sup>

Officials representing the western countries realised that their vetoes would place them in a poor light. They therefore called for a six-month arms embargo that did not invoke Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. After a denunciation of this measure by the African nations, on 1 November a compromise resolution was worked out that called for “review” of licensing arrangements through which Pretoria produces heavy weapons such as the French mirage fighter-bomber. But this compromise resolution invoked Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, and by invoking that Chapter, the resolution marked a certain victory for anti-apartheid groups.

### ***The Carter Administration's Swing to the Right***

But again the Carter administration tread carefully. This was evident when **they** attributed their support for the embargo to the specific events of October 1977 and not to the general structure of apartheid. On the 28 October, during an interview President Carter stated “we are supporting sanctions against South Africa because of the almost abolition of almost any voice of dissent in South Africa last week among groups representing black citizens.” According to one official source, “nothing short of a South African invasion of the United States” would persuade the US government of the need to lend their support to measures such as real sanctions.”<sup>29</sup> In any event the arms embargo was not a momentous event since the apartheid state was really self sufficient in arms production.

Although the Carter administration began its term on a high note raising expectations of liberation movements, from 1978 the administrations views on South Africa eventually took a rightward swing, spelling an end to the influence exercised earlier on in the administration by the regionalists. If anything, its position appeared more conciliatory towards the white minority regime. As early as the summer of 1977, the American Congress was characterised by a resurfacing of the right wing element which favoured

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<sup>28</sup> Danaher, *Political Economy of US Policy*, 171.

<sup>29</sup> Danaher, *Political Economy of US Policy*, 172.

the white minority rule in Rhodesia and the banning of aid to Mozambique and Angola. The influence of the regionalists was further undermined by the Cuban/Soviet intervention in Ethiopia beginning in late 1977. Given the history of US foreign policy from Kennedy, the erosion of any influence exercised by the regionalists in the Carter administration was a foregone conclusion much earlier.

In 1978 when guerrillas operating from Angola, invaded Zaire's Shaba province for a second time, it brought forth a hard anti-communist backlash from Washington. President Carter, who in the early months of his presidency provided the assurance that the "Russian and Cuban presence in Angola...need not constitute a threat to United States interests," was now issuing warning about the East West conflict on the African continent.<sup>30</sup> All of this did not augur well for the regionalists who suffered a serious loss of supporters in the 1978 Congressional elections. Senator Dick Clark and four other supporters of a relaxation of Cold War perspectives were defeated by the right wing republicans. The former was the Chair of the Africa sub-committee and had played an innovative role in liberalising US Africa policy.

The resurgence of the Cold War view of Africa from 1978, the administrations swing to the right and Pretoria's refusal to cooperate with Washington-all pushed the regionalists onto a retreat on South African policy. By October 1978, Carter and his officials returned to a Kissinger model of Africa policy that regionalists such as Young and Lake had criticized early in the Carter years. The new policy was very straightforward. The United States would hold in check its opposition to apartheid policies in return for South Africa's cooperation over the Rhodesian dilemma. In October Carter sent a confidential letter to South Africa's new Prime Minister, P. W. Botha, elaborating on the new approach. Not surprising, the South African response to these initiatives was one of great enthusiasm as the new Prime Minister spoke of his "gratification" with the President's letter.<sup>31</sup> In effect then, while Washington did pay more attention to southern Africa by this time, US policy remained the same. It did not deviate from the double standards of earlier years, with no support for liberation movements such as the ANC.

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<sup>30</sup> *Africa Report* (May/June 1976). 19.

<sup>31</sup> *New York Times* (3 December 1978). "U.S. Testing Policy on South Africa."

### **Soweto**

Notwithstanding the American practice of adopting double standards, the Soweto uprising and resultant state action succeeded in hardening international, and more specifically US sentiment against the apartheid state. The ANC benefited as its attempts to isolate the latter gained momentum. Chris Alden, in his analysis of the ANC's foreign policy, supports this contention by pointing out that the behaviour of the South Africa government in the wake of Soweto became "embedded in the politics of other countries such as the US which saw the Carter administration place human rights issues within the context of its domestic policy agenda."<sup>32</sup>

In 1977 South Africa became the first member of the UN, against which a resolution on mandatory sanctions was adopted by the Security Council. All this played favourably into the ANC's strategy of isolating South Africa politically, culturally and economically from the rest of the world. Clearly, the Soweto uprising helped the process of enhancing the position of the ANC, but not significantly enough to change official US policy.

Not long after the outbreak of the uprisings in Soweto, in September, the Senate African Affairs sub-committee began its hearings on South Africa under the Chairmanship of Senator Dick Clark. The aim of the Sub-Committee was to review various aspects of US business involvement in South Africa. Opening the hearings, Senator Clark made the statement that very little had been done by US corporations for the economic advancement of South African blacks. He therefore called on home offices of American companies to apply intense pressure on their South African subsidiaries to improve the position of blacks in their employment. Concern was also expressed over the increasing investment in South Africa by US companies. For Clark, that might have had the effect of strengthening the economy of South Africa, its present government and its apartheid policies. Witnesses such as Jennifer Davis of the American Committee reaffirmed her opposition to US investment in South Africa.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Chris Alden. "From Liberation Movement to Political Party: ANC Foreign Policy in Transition," in *The South African Journal of International Affairs*. Vol. 1. Spring 1993. 66.

<sup>33</sup> "Report: Opening Statement-Senate African Affairs Sub-Committee Hearings on South Africa. 29 September 1976. Foreign Affairs Files, 1/33/63(4). Department of Foreign Affairs, Union Buildings, Pretoria.

In a strongly worded response to the Chair of the Hearings, South Africa's Ambassador to Washington, R. F. Botha, made his country's objections of the hearings known. He complained "most strongly to the way in which your sub-committee has become a forum for attacks on South Africa." After all "we threaten no state...comply with our international obligations...and wish to live in peace with all our fellow African countries." He advised that "your committee would do better to direct its attention to the real problems of our continent. Africa is faced with vast problems in many fields"<sup>34</sup>.

Two months prior to the Hearings, Congressman Stephen Solarz, a liberal Democrat from New York visited South Africa, as part of a fact-finding mission to Southern Africa on behalf of the Committee on International Relations. A report on the visit was presented to the committee, the text of which was read to the House of Representatives. For the authorities in Pretoria, the remarks were found to be "rather disquieting."<sup>35</sup> For Solarz, the policy of his own government, articulated by Kissinger, was based on an illusion.

The importance of this report could be discerned from its ability to showcase US attitudes towards liberation movements such as the African National Congress. As officials in the US State Department either ignored the role of liberation movements in Southern Africa or remained reluctant to interact with them, Solarz alluded to the limiting nature of this strategy. In 1976, just before embarking on his African tour, Kissinger in a press conference unequivocally stressed that in all of their diplomatic manoeuvres, the US State Department and its officials had "not dealt directly with the black liberation movements." In view of these strategies Solarz pointed out, those black leaders in the region questioned the sincerity of US support for majority rule because they have "refrained," in contrast to the Chinese and Russians, from providing support and assistance to these movements in their quest to achieve majority rule. The solution to this shortcoming was to be found in "more actively identifying ourselves with the Liberation Movement." For this to be achieved, he called for the provision of economic and humanitarian assistance, since the blacks in South Africa were "among the most

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<sup>34</sup> Botha to Clark, 30 September 1976, Foreign Affairs Files, 1/33/76.

<sup>35</sup> Botha to Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Affairs Files, 1/33/3.

repressed people in the world...and whose accumulated resentment constitutes a political volcano on the verge of erupting.”<sup>36</sup>

South Africa continued to suffer greater image damage. According to the press reports 50 million Americans heard reports in August of a weekend television statement by the then South African Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons, Mr. Jimmy Kruger, which had become an issue of severe embarrassment for South Africa throughout the world. The statement, made at a National Party meeting in Frankfort in the Orange Free State in response to the black disturbances in the country was as follows: “He (the black man) knows his place and, if not, I will tell him his place.”<sup>37</sup> Two of the three national television networks in the United States broadcast Kruger’s statements during prime time news programmes on Friday and it was reported that several local television networks were referring to the statement for as long as 36 hours later. Even major newspapers in the US carried coverage of this statement.

Reaction in the US was thus rapid and effective. Such reaction was not uncommon in diplomatic circles as well where it was predicted that Kruger’s utterances could inhibit the American Secretary of State’s continuing contacts with South Africa. Although Kruger tried to counter the embarrassment by issuing explanations that he was misquoted, his efforts proved unsuccessful in countering the damage already in place.

### ***A Disappointing End to an Era***

I have succeeded in demonstrating that up until the 1980s, there was no real change in official state policies and attitudes towards the ANC and the liberation struggle in South Africa. Granted that events such as the Soweto uprising of 1976 succeeded in creating an awareness of the plight of the oppressed in South Africa and of the horrors perpetrated by the South African state, I would advance the view that they were not instrumental in creating a climate of official recognition by the American state officials of liberation organisations like the ANC. I have demonstrated that the latter years of the ‘liberal era’ of Carter were marked by a sharp move towards the right of the political spectrum and as a result the ANC made no progress during this ‘liberal interregnum.’

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<sup>36</sup> “Congressional Record, House of Representatives.” (4 August 1976). H8337.

<sup>37</sup> See *Pretoria News* (23 August 1976) and *The Star* (23 August 1976).

What is even more intriguing is that the ANC officially remained silent on Carter and Young's ineffectiveness. For Gail Gerhart such silence could be attributed to the fact that Carter's administration, though ineffective, was the only 'friendly' US administration. Her reasoning is strengthened by the observation that while all US administrations came under ANC attack in their various publications, on the Carter presidency, silence prevailed.<sup>38</sup> But in a discussion with Fred Dube, an ANC stalwart who spent time **in exile from** 1970 to 1997 in the USA, the Carter experience did make many within the movement more hostile to liberalism which was viewed as a handmaiden of capitalism.<sup>39</sup>

### *The Return of the Conservatives*

In 1980, Ronald Reagan's victory over incumbent Jimmy Carter represented a notable and momentous shift towards conservatism in US politics. Evidence supports my conclusion that great strides in the ANC's attempts to develop a relationship with the USA were made during the hostile administration of President Ronald Reagan. This was discernable during Reagan's second term of office when the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) was passed and when the ANC President, Oliver Tambo undertook his visit to the United States, accompanied by Thabo Mbeki in the latter part of 1986 and the early months of 1987.<sup>40</sup> The latter was targeted by for special attention by many, including the CIA in Washington and Chester Crocker.<sup>41</sup> Hence since 1982

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<sup>38</sup> This was a telephonic interview which I held with Gail Gerhart, who was in New York at this time. 11 March 2008. Gail Gerhart became interested in South Africa in the eighth grade when an exchange student from Johannesburg visited at her home in New York City. She first visited South Africa in 1963. Her undergraduate Harvard Honours thesis compared the US Civil Rights Movement, Gandhi's Satyagraha and the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Her Columbia Doctoral thesis became her first book, "Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology." (1978). With Thomas Karis, Gwendolen Carter and others, she is an author of the six volume series, From Protest to Challenge: The Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990.

<sup>39</sup> Conversations with Fred Dube between 20 and 24 June 2001. ANC Offices, Pietermaritzburg. Folder 2. See also ANC/UCONN Oral History Project, Interview undertaken with Fred Dube by Bruce Stave. 24 June 2001. ANC Archives, University of Fort Hare. With the help of the Quakers, he enrolled at Cornell University in the USA in 1970 and from there he graduated with his Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology. After graduating from Cornell, he went on to teach at Stonybrook College and remained in the US until his retirement in 1997.

<sup>40</sup> In September 1986, US legislators passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA). Reagan vetoed the bill, but Congress promptly overrode him. The CAAA banned private loans, new investments and computer sales by Americans in South Africa. It blocked imports of South African steel, uranium, and agricultural products into United States and withdrew landing rights for South African airlines. See Thomas J. Redden, Jr. "The US Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986: Anti-Apartheid or Anti-African National Congress?". African Affairs, Vol. 87, No. 349 (October 1988). See also the ACT at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

<sup>41</sup> Mbeki was targeted by USA officials and the CIA because, through his many visits to the USA and meetings with individuals, he was considered to have more pro-west leanings. See record of discussions

Mbeki held many discussions with Americans in Lusaka and in the USA. These included meetings with Crocker himself who in late 1986 forewarned him about a future meeting in Washington. So marked were the changes in the status quo, that this culminated in the meeting with George Shultz, and this happened some ten years after the Soweto uprising and only during Reagan's second term of office. While American administrations were consistent in their support for the apartheid state, I would argue that the most significant changes in policy towards South Africa and the ANC appear to have occurred during one of most harshest administrations-that of President Ronald Reagan.

Although closer to freedom which was to come in 1990 with the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela, for the liberation movement, this meeting set the pace for the opening of more doors in Washington. At this point it becomes necessary to caution against any view that I may be awarding undue credit to a very hostile Reagan presidency for its 'generous' overtures to the ANC. But the evidence to be presented clearly vindicates the view as I demonstrate that these diplomatic manoeuvres represented part of an overall strategy designed to push for the dismantling of apartheid. In fact Thabo Mbeki, who had accompanied Tambo to Washington for this meeting, reflected on his time in Washington some twenty years later in June 2004, when attending Reagan's funeral. He acknowledged that the Reagan administration had been the first in the USA to "recognise the ANC as a liberation movement and work with the ANC..."<sup>42</sup> This recognition epitomised the irony of the times.

Looking at the period of the mid 1980s within which these developments occurred, readers need to be reminded of the critical, yet intriguing nature of this time for the ANC internationally and internally. The ANC faced serious challenges within its movement and these threatened the unity of the movement and manifested themselves in the 1984 mutiny within Umkhonto we Sizwe. This resulted in a series of crackdowns by the ANC designed to end such activities and which included the construction of the infamous prison camp Quadro.<sup>43</sup> Internationally, this was a time when a new mood characterised

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held by Gail Gerhart with Mbeki on 31 May 1986. Copy of discussion furnished by Gerhart to the author. Folder 3.

<sup>42</sup> Mark Gevisser. *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* (Jeppestown. Jonathan Ball, 2007). 488.

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed study of this mutiny and its spill over effects onto other ANC camps, see Bandile Ketelo, Amos Maxongo, Zamxolo Tshona, Ronnie Massango and Luvu Mbengo. "A Miscarriage of Democracy: The ANC Security Department in the 1984 Mutiny in Umkhonto we Sizwe," in *Searchlight South Africa*. Vol. 2, No. 1. (July 1990).

both the protagonists of this chapter-Moscow and Washington. While doors were opening in Washington, those in Moscow appeared to be subtly closing as I will later demonstrate. This view will be strengthened in the following paragraphs.

### ***Events leading up to the Tambo/Shultz Meeting***

But given the dynamics that characterised the political climate in the USA, it would be appropriate to firstly focus on Washington where the first high level meeting between a leader of an African Liberation movement and senior official of the Reagan administration took place. Before proceeding to examine this critical time in the ANC's history, it will serve arguments in this chapter well to contextualise this meeting. Official sources such as US state memoranda between then Assistant Secretary Chester Crocker, Secretary of State George Shultz and other state department officials and officials in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), all provided substantial evidence for me to argue that those in Washington, including President Reagan, during his second term of office, had reorganised their diplomatic strategies to accommodate the following perceptions:

- That apartheid had to be dismantled. This was non-negotiable.
- That the USA had a role to play in pushing for the appropriate climate for negotiations between the apartheid state and South African opposition and resistance organisations.
- That the ANC as an organisation was becoming too much of a force to ignore.
- That there was no alternative political group to the African National Congress.<sup>44</sup>

One of the strategies adopted to give impetus to the dismantling process was the formation of the US Corporate Council whose aim was to “coordinate business efforts promote reform” and to “align with South African business” in this regard. This initiative according to Crocker, was expected to “dovetail well with our encouragement of US institutions to commit resources to constructive, long term programmes to increase

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<sup>44</sup> See Memoranda and correspondence between November 1985-April 1987, in the National Security Archive Microfiche collection: *South Africa: The Making of US Policy 1962-1989*. The National Security Archive is a non-governmental research library of declassified US documents. The library is located in George Washington University, Washington DC.

educational and economic opportunities for black South Africans.”<sup>45</sup> This allows me to surmise that the transatlantic traffic of black South Africans to the USA, wishing to exploit such opportunities, would have increased in this time. This did happen but will be fully explored at the latter part of this chapter.

Prior to his meeting with Tambo, and in many of his all his memoranda, public statements and correspondence to OECD Capitals, Shultz communicated the need for “genuine reform efforts” and “most importantly for negotiations between the South African government and opposition leaders”- thus allowing me to contend that this meeting with Tambo was part of the new US strategy to create that climate “conducive to the beginning of negotiations. Such views dominated Shultz official pronouncements even after the visit.”<sup>46</sup> It was according to Executive Secretary Nicholas Platt, necessary to look at change in South Africa “as a process which requires a sustained and positive US involvement, rather than a situation calling for symbolic one-time gestures, or a negative approach.”<sup>47</sup> But it was a year later, seven months before meeting Tambo, that Shultz acknowledged that “the hour is late for peaceful change in South Africa” and warned that “apartheid imposes an intolerable moral, strategic, economic and political” burden on Western interests.<sup>48</sup> Even Reagan, as reported in a Special segment in the *New York Times* in July 1986, a few months before the Tambo/Shultz meeting, urged Pretoria to move towards “political peace”, and for the first time “asked the government of PW Botha to establish a ‘timetable’ for the elimination of apartheid and to release all political prisoners.”<sup>49</sup> Simply enough, these dynamics clearly hastened this process and the ending of apartheid in South Africa was for the players in Washington by now a foregone conclusion.

Further evidence for my arguments came from the controversial Shultz Commission report which was released in February 1987, but was commissioned as early as 1986 by

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<sup>45</sup> Assistant Secretary Chester Crocker, Action Memorandum for Secretary George Shultz, “US Corporate Council on South Africa”, October 24, 1985, In National Security Archive, *Making of US Policy*. Document 17. Washington DC.

<sup>46</sup> See Secretary George Shultz, Cable for ALL OECD Capitals, “Text of Report to Congress on US Multilateral Measures to Dismantle Apartheid”, April 4, 1987. Document 19.

<sup>47</sup> Executive Secretary Nicholas Platt, Memorandum for Vice-President’s National Security Advisor Donald Gregg, “Public Diplomacy on South Africa: Involving US Congressional Groups in Dialogue and Chang,: November 5, 1985. Document 18.

<sup>48</sup> “If Apartheid is that Evil”, in the *New York Times* (4 June 1986).

<sup>49</sup> Gerald M. Boyd, Special Correspondent to the *New York Times* (23 July 1986).

the state department to assess and report on US policy toward South Africa. The conclusion of the report was valiant and powerful and had phenomenal repercussions for South Africa's liberation movements such as the ANC. Reagan's "strategy of constructive engagement has failed to achieve its objectives," it pointed out and hence the panel of commissioners accordingly called on President Reagan "to play a personal leadership role in communicating the sense of purpose and will needed for an effective US policy toward South Africa." Picking up on the conclusions of the report, media in the USA and Europe supported the conclusion and the call by the panel for a new policy towards the South African dilemma. In its report entitled *Epitaph for Constructive Engagement*, the New York Times ended its report with wise advice for those concerned. "The Carter policy did not work and the Reagan Administration changed it. Now the State Department's own handpicked panel says the Reagan policy has also failed. It is about time to abandon the wreckage."

International reaction to this report was predictable as were the views of Reagan supporters. Even the Russians were fascinated by the contents of the report. This was apparent in a conversation between Michael Clough, the main drafter of the report and Vladimir Ganchin, who was the 3rd Secretary at the Soviet Mission to the UN charged with responsibility for Africa and small territories. Ganchin even communicated how this report raised perplexities in his home country over the "discrepancy between Reagan's Constructive Engagement and the Shultz report."

State, media and public reaction to Tambo and the ANC at this time also provided further evidence to demonstrate that the dynamics and perceptions in Washington were undergoing a dramatic change and that for the ANC there finally appeared that little bit of light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel, thus strengthening my earlier contentions. Secretary of State, George Shultz granted an audience to Tambo in January 1987, demonstrating that Washington was affording the ANC some degree of legitimacy. While Tambo had been a frequent visitor to the United States since 1960, during which he was given many opportunities to address the United Nations, and there were many unofficial meetings that took place between ANC officials and individuals in the USA,

this was the first ever high level contact between the USA State and the African National Congress.<sup>50</sup>

This is not to say that there were no previous US state contacts with the ANC. One example that merits attention is that of Allard Lowenstein who held his first meeting with ANC representatives in 1966 in Dar es Salaam and continued to meet with them until his assassination in 1980. Lowenstein who, while holding many official positions, including that of one of Carter's ambassadors to the UN, was also a CIA operative who even met Nelson Mandela on Robben Island. While he started out in 1966, by reporting to the CIA that the ANC was "unreliable and uncontrollable and therefore unacceptable," just before his death in 1980 he began "laying the groundwork for a flexible American policy in South Africa," to dismantle apartheid" while acknowledging that there was "no alternative political group to the ANC."<sup>51</sup>

William Doemar, a correspondent for *Time* magazine, covered the Tambo visit but focused as did many other correspondents reporting on the visit, at some length on the ANC's ties with the Communists. But the irony was that Moscow was about to experience Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* programme which was formally implemented in June 1987 and which was to ultimately test these 'ties', thus proving challenging to the ANC's relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> In a fleeting reference to the Tambo/Shultz meeting, Doemar quoted Shultz who 'conceded' that as the ANC "has emerged as an important part of the South African political equation," it was becoming increasingly

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<sup>50</sup> US Assistant Secretary of State, Chester Crocker, met Tambo in London in September 1986. This was a pragmatic initiative on the part of the us to prepare for the forthcoming Tambo/Shultz meeting. What was significant about this meeting in London was Crocker's explanation to Tambo of the reason for this meeting. "We are not talking to you", he pointed out, "because we like you, but because we know that you have influence in South Africa". *Time* Magazine covered this meeting in some depth under the heading "South African Rebels with A Cause". *Time* Magazine (27 October 1986).

<sup>51</sup> Allard Lowenstein started on his career as a foreign policy aide to Senator Humphrey . Humphrey was a liberal politician who became the first to actively engage himself in the anti-apartheid movement in the USA. After this Lowenstein was then recruited to become a CIA agent in 1962, won an election to Congress as a Democrat from New York in 1968, was Carter's Ambassador to the UN in the 1970s and then became involved in the groundwork for the US's role in the dismantling of Apartheid. See Richard Cummings. "A Diamond is Forever: Mandela Triumphs, Buthezezi and De Klerk Survive, and ANC on the US Payroll," in *Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*. (Summer 1995). 1-5.

<sup>52</sup> Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev introduced this system of economic restructuring with the goal of developing a market economy for his country. Scholars have attributed the dismantling of the Soviet Union to the problems created by Perestroika. See Mikhail Gorbachev. *Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World* (New York. Harper and Row, 1987); Irina Filatova. "Some Thoughts on Soviet South African Studies "Stagnation" and Perestroika," in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*. Vol.25, No. 1 (1992).

necessary to afford it some recognition.<sup>53</sup> This was the recognition which the ANC set as its goal in trying to build its relationship with the US state.

That this was an encouraging development during the Reagan tenure was undeniable, for this was the most painful USA administration for the ANC to handle. This was the period which witnessed the implementation of the 'Reagan Doctrine', 'Constructive Engagement' the 'Southern Africa Policy Review' and 'Coercive diplomacy'.<sup>54</sup> As Tambo pointed out in an interview with *Time* on 27 October 1986:

The Reagan Administration still holds on to the concept that South Africa is an ally. We would like to see the US break that alliance and take a firm position on the side of the victims, not only in South Africa, but in the whole region. The US has its own history, its own experience, which is similar to what we are experiencing in South Africa. The US is the last country that should see itself as an ally of the apartheid system.<sup>55</sup>

Only three months later, Shultz provided a private audience to Tambo, marking the first time that a Senior US official had met with a banned leader of the ANC. Reporting on the meeting the *National Review* viewed this meeting as a "broadening of the US policy of constructive engagement with the South African government."<sup>56</sup> Yet the *Review* questioned the convening of this meeting while pointing out that this was the administration that opposed "dealing with terrorists" and about which "nobody was sterner than Shultz."<sup>57</sup>

### ***US Media and the Tambo/Shultz Meeting***

While this visit brought a measure of success to the ANC and Tambo, press coverage and public reaction was interesting. Much of the press coverage of the visit was hostile. The *New York Times* interviewed Tambo and the resulting Headline, *African National Congress Leader Defends Killing of Whites* was enough to set the tone for the hostile nature of

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<sup>53</sup> *Time Magazine* (3 March 1987). William Doemar. "The Red and the Black: Questions about a Communist Role in the Liberation of South Africa."

<sup>54</sup> These policies and their repercussions for the African continent and the ANC will be examined in the following chapter.

<sup>55</sup> *Time* (27 October 1986). Tambo interview, "We are Nobody's Puppets", with William R. Doemar.. Focus on the Reagan administration will be undertaken in the following chapter.

<sup>56</sup> *Time* (9 February 1987). "An Agreement to Disagree" (ANC's Oliver Tambo meets with George Shultz).

<sup>57</sup> *National Review*. (27 February 1987). "Tango with Tambo" (Oliver Tambo visits USA).

its coverage of the interview. The same reaction came from ABC's *Nightline* programme in which anchor person Ted Koppel interrogated Tambo about the movement's 'guerrilla war' and went to the extremes of pushing Tambo to call for a cease fire on television- without even consulting his executive. Reporting in its editorial, on media reaction during the Tambo tour, *The Nation* made a significant observation that "rarely in recent years has the US media so completely allowed a foreign country- in this case the Pretoria regime- to define the terms of debate."<sup>58</sup>

As the state, through this meeting, afforded the ANC some form of recognition, American civil society remained divided. While the solidarity movements may have been successful in pressurising Washington to end its support of the apartheid state, this does not mean that they represented the views of the majority. This was evident during the Shultz/Tambo meeting when conservative protestors mobilised themselves outside the State Department and called to Tambo to "go home" while accusing the ANC of being an arm of the Russian KGB.<sup>59</sup>

### ***A New Mood in Moscow: Doors are Closing***

As pointed out in an earlier discussion, it was ironical that many in Washington, including media, were unrelenting in their usual criticism of the ANC being an arm of the Soviet Union. But events unfolding in Moscow demonstrated a 'new mood' emerging in relation to its links with the ANC, with the Soviet Union beginning to reassess its support for liberation organisations such as the ANC. Useful sources were Steven Friedman and Monty Narsoo, both who visited the Soviet Union in mid 1987 and who undertook a firsthand analysis of the changes being wrought in Soviet foreign and domestic policies. Studying the mood in Moscow, they focused on the Soviet views, the major players in Moscow, the influence of global developments on changing policy **and** the shortcomings and ANC reactions.<sup>60</sup> Another useful source was Vladimir Ganchin, the Third Secretary at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations, responsible for Africa and areas like the Pacific Islands.

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<sup>58</sup> *The Nation*. (14 February 1987). "Tambo on Tour (Oliver Tambo)." (editorial).

<sup>59</sup> *Time*. (9 February 1987). "An Agreement to Disagree (ANC's Oliver Tambo Meets with George Shultz)."

<sup>60</sup> Steven Friedman was the Policy Manager of the South African Institute of Race Relations and Monty Narsoo was a former trade unionist.

In essence Friedman and Narsoo argued that Soviet views were undergoing a change as there appeared to be more contacts between different sections of Soviet society and non-ANC South Africans. Previously this relationship and related contact was limited to that with the ANC and its members. Meetings took place between South African academics, politicians and journalists and the Soviets. One such meeting was that which took place in West Germany with the ANC present as well. Further they provided substantial evidence to support the view that the Soviet Union appeared keen to join other Western nations such as the USA to 'secure a negotiated settlement' in South Africa.<sup>61</sup> However Friedman and Narsoo were emphatic that while there was no official view on this issue, evidence pointed to a subtle change in official views. These changes were driven by economic consideration which necessitated political settlements in areas of conflict where Soviet involvement was marked. That Moscow could no longer afford further drain on its financial resources provided justification for these subtle mood changes.

The ANC's reaction to these developments in the Soviet Union was predictable. Simply put, they were just towing the official party line on this relationship or they were suffering a denial of the reality. In their interview with the ANC Chief representative in Moscow, Mr. Makhana, Friedman and Narsoo learned that in spite of all the evidence presented to them, the ANC emphasised that there was no change in their relationship with that country. On the basis of the situation in which they found themselves, it would be remiss to be critical of the ANC for not facing up to the situation. Remembering Tambo's earlier justification for the ANC's reliance on the Soviet Union, it may have been extremely difficult for the movement to accept that it may be losing its only loyal and reliable international ally.<sup>62</sup>

This view is strengthened by a study of views of Soviet activists such as Vladimir Shubin, who in his presentation to the Anti-Apartheid Conference in Durban emphatically

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<sup>61</sup> These scholars held formal and informal meetings with a fairly varied representation of Soviet stakeholders and included researchers from the Africa Institute as well as its director, Dr. Gleb Starushenko, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, the ANC Mission in Moscow, the Soviet Institute of general History and the Novosti Press Agency. Responses from the interviews and discussions yielded no unanimity of views on the nature of the changes taking place in the Soviet Union. This was guided by the individual's standing in relation to the incumbent administration and the previous administration as well as by ideological leanings. But all agreed that changes were happening.

<sup>62</sup> See Steven Friedman and Monty Narsoo. *A New Mood in Moscow: Soviet Attitudes to South Africa* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1989.)

denied that *perestroika* meant the Soviet Union's 'alienation' of the ANC and its 'rapprochement' with Pretoria. He supported his argument by referring to Tambo's meeting with Gorbachev in November 1986 during which he reassured the former that he would only consider talks with the apartheid state when the ANC leadership agreed to it. Shubin used further examples, such as the Soviet involvement in *Operation Vula* to illustrate that the cooperation between the ANC and Moscow strengthened from 1987 to 1990.<sup>63</sup>

But I would take issue with Shubin on this for in September 1987 a closed door meeting took place between Cuba, the Soviet Union and the ANC, whose delegation was led by Tambo who a few months earlier met with Shultz. I have not been able to locate extensive evidence of the discussions that took place, but Shubin himself revealed that the crucial area of discussion for this meeting was the need for a political settlement. Clearly then, the academics in Moscow were correct in their assessments of Soviet developments. Pressure was clearly applied on the ANC to seek a political settlement. Further evidence on the Soviet call for a political settlement came from a government insider, Vladimir Ganchin, who in a conversation with Gail Gerhart was very candid about this issue. He pointed out that given the Soviet Union's track record of involvement with national liberation movements around the world, they found the experience a 'disappointment'. In regard to South Africa, he explained, the Soviet Union could make "dividends" for the country by reiterating its current position with the ANC, which was that it favoured a "negotiated political settlement." He also justified these policy views by naming many countries or movements who placed the Soviet Union in an embarrassing situation.<sup>64</sup>

Despite Gorbachev's earlier reassurances to Tambo regarding contact with Pretoria, he established contacts with the apartheid state by 1990. By the time Boris Yeltsin assumed power his policy included the development of rapid ties with Pretoria. This could best be illustrated by the changing relationship between the Soviet Union and the ANC, a process that began in 1987. This culminated in the establishment by the former, of

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<sup>63</sup> This subject is well covered in Ronnie Kasrils. *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 2004). See also Vladimir Shubin. *A View from Moscow*, 332.

<sup>64</sup> Gail Gerhart Conversation with Vladimir V. Ganchin. 12 November 1987. Notes of conversation in possession of author. Folder 4. Specific countries mentioned included Cambodia, Angola, Namibia and South Africa.

formal diplomatic relations with the apartheid state in February 1992 and the ending of financial support to the ANC's offices in Moscow.

Many have attempted to argue that *perestroika* signified the demise of the Soviet Union and consequently 'the end of history' and the triumph of world capitalism. Perhaps this is how many liberation organisations who depended on this pillar of Socialism for material and financial support, amongst others, interpreted the new mood in Moscow. But today, as the ruling party of South Africa, the ANC has acknowledged the wisdom of *perestroika* and the resulting Soviet policy decisions that emerged as a result of that initiative. This arises from the current recognition within the party of the impossibility of divorcing political and economic change from global developments. Writing in *Umrabulo* in July 2007, *Michael Sachs*, a Coordinator of the ANC NEC Economic Transformation Committee acknowledged that Soviet developments in the 1980s were tied to global developments. In an assessment of Gorbachev's policies, Sachs, devoid of emotion that so characterised any ANC review of its relationship with the Soviet Union, clinically described these policies as an attempt to resolve regional disputes and one "which paved the way for the end of the Cold War conflict in Angola, the independence of Namibia and the political liberation of South Africa." The fact that Sachs chose to address this issue almost two decades after the implementation of *perestroika*, is significant. I have used this current model of thinking within the ANC to demonstrate that the movement was aware during the mid 1980s of these changes taking place and of the global considerations that governed them, but strategically chose to ignore the writing on the wall until it was secure in the knowledge that it was legitimately governing a democratic South Africa-thus justifying why it is currently impossible for South Africa to be divorced from international developments.<sup>65</sup>

As the meeting between Shultz and Tambo represented a milestone in this study, I would like to pause and reflect on an observation of Tambo's made a few months prior to this meeting while on a visit to Malaysia. This observation supports the view that Tambo had no earlier indication that a meeting of this level was possible so soon. In alluding to the challenges of this relationship, which included the USA's refusal to engage with liberation

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<sup>65</sup> *Umrabulo* is a journal of the ANC which was first published in 1996. The purpose of the journal, as described in its editions, is "to encourage debate and rigorous discussions at all levels of the movement". See Michael Sachs. "The End of History is over," in *Umrabulo*. July 2007. No. 29. 13.

movements such as the ANC, the President of the ANC indicated that the reason was a simple and obvious one. He explained that this reason could be found in the link between racism and imperialism, between what is considered to be those of a “primitive culture or race” and a “superior species.”<sup>66</sup> Tambo went further to refer to this application in the USA whereupon he pointed out that:

One only has to see the statistics of unemployment, drug addiction, homelessness...to realise the extent to which the black population is marginalised and serves as a living example for the most backward elements to “prove” the assertion that to be black is to belong to a category of the human species that is less than human and which must be used as befits its status.<sup>67</sup>

For my study such a view, which has positioned the relationship within the context of race, has been important in shifting emphasis from debates which focused on purely strategic and economic considerations in trying to rationalise USA support for the apartheid state and non-support for the liberation movements and the freedom struggle in South Africa.

But for Nelson Mandela, the world’s most famous political prisoner, who reflected on this meeting between Tambo and the US Secretary of State in his autobiography, this appeared to be a non event. In just two lines he dismissed the meeting by indicating that “the Americans recognised the ANC as an indispensable element of any solution in South Africa.” Yet in the same autobiography, in documenting his visit to the USA in 1990, he appeared complimentary about his meeting with President George Bush Snr, ironically alluding to the fact that “even before meeting Mr. Bush, I had formed a positive impression of him....he was a man with whom one could disagree and then

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<sup>66</sup> What is really being conveyed here is the thesis that those classified as superior beings have a right to ensure the protection and ‘purity’ of the human species even if that should result in crimes against humanity. The similarity between these views and that of the Nazi’s is quite startling. For more on justifications for such crimes such as apartheid see N. J. Rhodie and H.J. Venter in Pierre van den Berghe. *South Africa-A Study in Conflict* (Berkeley. University of California Press, 1967).

<sup>67</sup> Oliver Tambo. “Racism, Apartheid and the World order.” Speech in acceptance of the Third World Prize on behalf of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 5 May 1986. This prize was awarded to Nelson and Winnie Mandela to recognise their “outstanding contribution to Third World Progress”. See *Umrabulo*, Vol. 12. September 2001. <sup>60</sup> See also Transafrica for an assessment of the effects of Reagan’s policies towards African Americans in Maurice Jackson. “Washington D.C.: The Mess in Reagan’s Backyard,” in *Political Affairs*, Transafrica Collection.

shake hands.”<sup>68</sup> Perhaps an interview with Mr. Mandela today, 18 years after that meeting, might not yield a similar response.



Image 3: Nelson Mandela and President George Bush (Snr.) on the White House Lawns during Mandela's 1990 visit.<sup>69</sup>

### ***More Doors Open in Washington***

But backtracking to the Tambo visit to Washington, the real success of the visit could be discerned from *The Nation's* editorial which reported on the “power elites’ who were “eager to hop on the Tambo Train.” This was a reference to the many political and corporate requests to attend a luncheon hosted by the Foreign Policy Association and at which Tambo was expected to address guests. Those who eventually heard Tambo speak included representatives from Citicorp, Ford, General Motors, Morgan Guaranty, Mrs

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<sup>68</sup> Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston. Little Brown and Company, 1995). 477, 508.

<sup>69</sup> Courtesy ANC archives.

Laurence Rockefeller and former Treasury Secretary, W. Michael Blumenthal.<sup>70</sup> The reason for this was clear. They were positioning themselves for their involvement in a post apartheid South Africa. In essence they were reserving their spaces for a place in the sun.

They were not the only ones trying to reserve their place in the sun. Six months later in July 1987, a meeting of 61 predominantly Afrikaans speaking whites and Coloureds **was** held with an ANC delegation in Dakar, Senegal for three days. This group, led by Dr. Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, was convened by the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) with the purpose of opening contact with the ANC. For the ANC, this meeting presented an opportunity to present its position and to “demolish some stereotypes.”<sup>71</sup> The meeting coming so soon on the heels of the Shultz/Tambo meeting was significant because it provided the ANC with the legitimacy for which it aspired since its birth in 1912.<sup>72</sup>

The final area that merits scrutiny before concluding this chapter and one with which I could personally identify, is the extent of US involvement in the educational sector of South Africa.<sup>73</sup> This area will be used to strengthen the core argument that it was during the Regan area that many doors opened for the ANC and for many South African black South Africans, thus demonstrating greater contact between those in the US and the latter, but with a specific agenda on the part of the US state. This is best demonstrated by data which indicated that between 1981 and 1989, many ANC aligned South Africans travelled to the USA as part of the Fulbright, Southern African Research Programme (SARP) at Yale University, United States Information Agency (USIA) or the United States-South Africa Leadership programmes (USSALEP).<sup>74</sup> More US visas were made

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<sup>70</sup> *The Nation* (14 February 1987).

<sup>71</sup> This meeting and its declarations was well covered by Sechaba, in an article entitled “Apartheid Nervousness over the Dakar meeting” that appeared as an editorial in the September 1987 issue.

<sup>72</sup> This meeting led to the development of a close relationship between Mbeki and Slabbert. See Mark Gevisser. *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* . 484.

<sup>73</sup> My time at Yale University as a Yale Fellow was funded by the SARP Programme as indicated in the introduction..

<sup>74</sup> All of these programmes were funded by the US government through agencies with strong CIA links. USSALEP was generously supported with CIA funds and further support from AMAX, a USA mining colossus on whose boards served Presidents Gerald Ford and Carter. This same organisation had by 1992 disbursed sub grants of \$4.8 million to the ANC and \$2.8 to the Inkatha Freedom Party with the intention of assisting them build capacity for their participation in the pre-democracy negotiations. See Cummings. “A Diamond is Forever. Mandela triumphs, Buthelezi and De Klerk Survive, and ANC on USA Payroll.” 2, 4.

available for Black South Africans to undertake such travel, a rare commodity during previous administrations. As a result by the end of 1983, the administration spent \$4 million annually on scholarship programmes that saw almost 100 black South Africans benefit from these undergraduate and graduate programmes in USA. According to Coker by the end of 1984, over 400 students had “enrolled in campuses across the country.” Such programmes were designed to take South Africans to the USA instead of Washington investing in training programmes in South Africa. Instead of using education to “increase the black community’s awareness of power,” the US administration, which included Chester Crocker who supported these initiatives and their goals, actually “uprooted” South Africans from their communities. Coker argued that such strategies found synergies with Pretoria’s attempts to ensure that Blacks were not trained to become “initiators of change.”<sup>75</sup>

These initiatives also formed part of the larger and new US strategy of increased involvement in South Africa with a view to creating a climate for the dismantling of apartheid, as discussed at some length earlier in this chapter. An underlying intention was also gauged from Executive Secretary Nicholas Platt’s memorandum in which he explained that such programmes would help those who participated “gain a better understanding of the process of change, and of our role in it, while at the same time strengthening moderate forces in South Africa.”<sup>76</sup> So I would be justified in concluding that there was certainly no evidence of the presence of any humanitarian element in the adoption of the educational exchange strategy. It merely formed part of the overall US strategy of appealing to the moderate elements in South Africa and of gaining support from participants visiting the USA for US actions and of moulding them in pro-western directions. I would argue that these strategies were not all that new. Educational programmes were used since 1910 by American missionaries and philanthropists as part of their “civilising mission” and as part of their strategy of creating a docile black working class.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Christopher Coker, *The United States and South Africa 1968-1985: Constructive Engagement and its Critics* (Durham. Duke University Press, 1986). 186. These programmes were strategically implemented to prevent Washington from coming into any direct confrontation with the apartheid state over its interventions.

<sup>76</sup> See Platt Memorandum, “Public Diplomacy in South Africa”, in National Security Archive. Document 18.

<sup>77</sup> Donald R. Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (Colorado. Westview Press, 1999). 25. See also Edward Berman, *The Influence of Carnegie, Ford and the Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy: The Ideology of Philanthropy* (Albany. SUNY Press, 1983).

From a personal perspective, I was part of this programme of exchange at Yale University (SARP) in about 1990-1993. While I recall the feeling of awe I experienced at being a Yale fellow and of being a part of the illustrious academic experience at this Ivy League school, what was subtly happening to me was that I was buying into the US concept of a change model for South Africa's dilemmas. This recognition did not emerge until many years later after my return to South Africa. For me what was explicitly clear was that by uprooting South Africans from their communities to be part of the 'American experience,' the intentions was to ensure that time spent in the USA would nudge such participants into buying into the USA's views of the type of political change it envisaged for the country.

While this was not surprising, what I found interesting about this political sphere and its dynamics was that in spite of the Reagan administration's track record in regards to involvement on the African continent in collusion with South Africa and its intelligence agencies, and its unyielding support of the apartheid state, ANC aligned individuals seized such educational opportunities. Between 1980 and 1989, 375 South Africans travelled to the USA as part of Fulbright programme alone. Alumni of this programme included prominent political activists such as Dr. Wally Serote, Professor Salem Badat, Professor Leila Patel and Dr. Mathole Motshekga. For Dr. Serote, who was head of the ANC Cultural Desk in London and Head of the ANC Department of Arts and Culture in Lusaka, the Fulbright programme "afforded me the opportunity to interact with writers at an international level and also to understand the US as a world power...these years I spent in America studying when the most difficult years of totalitarianism, oppression and state violence in my country. I was freed from this abnormal life and given a chance to think about my future." Complimentary views by ANC individuals were the order of the day. Even President Mbeki, the current State President of South Africa, had positive views of the Fulbright programme. On a message to the Programme marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Fulbright in South Africa, he acknowledged "the role played by the Fulbright Programme during the apartheid era when academic freedom was stifled, access of black people to Higher education in general...was restricted and international education and research cooperation for all South Africans was severely constrained. Defying the apartheid regulations, the Fulbright Programme provided

opportunities to South Africans regardless of class, colour and creed to pursue post-graduate study and research.<sup>78</sup>

Given the views of prominent ANC officials, it behoves me to conclude that the ANC did take a flexible position on these programmes and on those who were part of the exchanges. While Marxist academics such as Professor Ben Magubane were opposed to programmes such as the SARP at Yale University, I found that such experiences were critical in generating links between US progressives and South African progressives. Links I established with US progressives during that period served me well in my attempts to build educational skills capacity and to repatriate South African heritage material in a post apartheid society. Those such as Democratic President William Jefferson Clinton were also able to piggyback on such links in a post apartheid South Africa. Further, relationships that emerged as a result of those exchanges were clearly important in influencing opinions in Washington from the Reagan years through the negotiations and finally to a post democratic South Africa.

### ***Conclusion***

Concluding this chapter presents a conundrum for me for the following reasons. The examination of policy of the US administrations from Carter to Reagan towards the ANC was consistent. Again a strengthening of the US's alliance with the apartheid state was the order of the day. Even the Soweto uprising, while it led to a slight hardening of attitudes in the US, did not aid the cause for liberation in the USA. If anything this period of the 1980s were clearly the most distressing for the movement. Yet I have demonstrated, there were more contacts between US officials and apartheid leaders and ministers and investment in South Africa increased in the post Soweto period, thus signifying a strengthening of the USA/South Africa relationship.

Although one may credit the ANC for its strategy of leveraging its relationship with the Soviet Union in a manner that could help facilitate recognition from Washington, even this proved difficult in the 1980s after Gorbachev took the reins of power, thus turning a former and loyal ally of the ANC into a 'cool' partner. Back home in South Africa,

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<sup>78</sup> See Publication entitled 50: Golden Jubilee Alumni Directory. Obtained from the USA Embassy (Pretoria) in March 2008.

apartheid repression reached unprecedented levels. Even within its ranks, the ANC faced challenges. It would have been difficult to accept that barely five years to a decade later the ANC would be unbanned in South Africa and Mandela released after 27 years in prison, thus paving the way for freedom.

In spite of depressing developments which appeared to drive the ANC into a corner, I would conclude that the 1980s were also a time of opportunity and hope for the ANC as demonstrated by the first high level meeting between the USA and the ANC, the passing of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, the increased opportunity for US/ANC interaction provided through mechanisms such as the educational exchanges and the meeting in Dakar. These were the signs that support my view that the ANC was close to achieving its goal of securing recognition for legitimacy.

But the conundrum disappears when one explores the reasons for the changing mood in Washington and the role, not only of the ANC, but of other agents such as the American solidarity organisations who were critical to forcing a change of mood in Washington. Here I have argued that for the USA, the writing was clearly on the wall. Apartheid had to be dismantled. This is evidenced by the series of events such as the Shultz/Tambo meeting and many diplomatic manoeuvres such as the formation of the Corporate Council, the warnings to the apartheid state and the increased involvement in educational investment in South African/USA. All of these also serve to demonstrate that Carter and Young failed miserably to exploit opportunities to make the necessary contact with the ANC. The only 'liberal' US administration in the period of my study and in the period of the South Africa's freedom struggle, will go down in history as being the most hypocritical one in terms of its African diplomacy initiatives.

## Chapter Five

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### SHARING THE PAIN: THE USA SOLIDARITY NETWORK AND THE ANC

#### **Abstract**

*In presenting my main arguments, I have arranged this chapter to focus on three periods; the first up to the 1950s, the second being from the late 1950s-1970s and the final period being the 1980s. This strategy allows me to demonstrate how early relationships between the ANC and individuals and organizations in the USA, including those of a personal nature, were brought to bear on campaigns. These grew to reach a level of such power in the 1980s that they eventually proved instrumental in influencing US policy towards the apartheid state as well as US views on liberation movements and South African activists or those considered to be 'terrorists'. Events that unfolded in South Africa facilitated the process. A combination of factors which included the work of the US solidarity network together with the turbulence pervading South Africa helped guide Washington's decision to become involved in dismantling apartheid as argued in the previous chapter. How the work of the network helped achieve such a momentous goal forms the main component of this chapter. While the focus of this chapter is on the US Solidarity network, it must be noted that solidarity with the South African freedom struggle was reaching unprecedented levels in other countries of the world. This was particularly the case in countries like India where by 1987 the International Conference of Youth Against Apartheid was convened and the call for South Africa's isolation was strong.<sup>1</sup> Even in Canada, activist groups began to lobby the government in their country with much vigour.<sup>2</sup> But my aims in this chapter will also substantiate my view that the ANC could not have accomplished its goal of establishing a relationship with the US state without the work of the activists in that country. Considerable attention will be devoted to the Reagan administration with the intention of demonstrating the role played by certain groups in*

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<sup>1</sup> India was a supporter of the struggle efforts in South Africa since 1946. This continued throughout the struggle history with the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi calling rather vociferously in 1985 for a total isolation of South Africa. See Enuga Reddy. India and South Africa: A Collection of Papers (Durban. University of Durban Westville, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Linda Freeman. The Ambiguous Champion: Canada and South Africa in the Mulroney Years (Toronto. University of Toronto Press, 1997). 69.

*exposing the sinister relationship that existed between the apartheid state and this administration, especially in the area of military intelligence.*

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Image 4: Nelson Mandela, Sylvia Hill and Gay McDougall at a reception for Nelson Mandela in 1990.

They were invited by Mandela to visit South Africa as part of the 'Democracy Now' Tour.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Picture furnished Courtesy of Sylvia Hill.

Reflecting on his first visit to the USA after his release in 1990, Mandela poignantly described the feeling he experienced on the New York leg of his journey.

I had read about New York City since I was a young man, and finally to see it from the bottom of its great glass and concrete canyons while millions and millions of pieces of ticker tape came floating down was a breathtaking experience. It was reported that as many as a million people personally witnessed **our** procession through the city, and to see the support and enthusiasm they gave to the anti-apartheid struggle was truly humbling. I had always read that New York was a hard hearted place, but I felt the very opposite of that on my first full day in the city.<sup>4</sup>

This single reflection by the icon of South Africa's freedom struggle is evidence of the role of US civil society in changing the course of the USA/ANC relationship in the period under review. How the work and activities of this segment of the USA infiltrated mainstream USA politics and forced phenomenal changes in national policymaking, forms a crucial and remarkable component not only in the narrative of the USA/ANC relationship, but also in that of the South African freedom struggle. In line with this recognition, I therefore contend that no study of this relationship can be undertaken without a scrutiny of role of the solidarity movement.<sup>5</sup> This would include an assessment of the effectiveness of the latter in raising the profile of the ANC in the USA and of advancing the struggle **in** the international arena. In this regards I would point out that there has been a tendency in recent years to minimize or underestimate the key role played by such groups in the struggle against apartheid.

A unique feature of the Solidarity Movement in the USA was its diversity. There were numerous groups, organizations and individuals who comprised this movement over different periods. Unlike the British Anti-apartheid or Irish Anti-Apartheid movements, the US movement was comprised of hundreds of different organizations and groups who

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<sup>4</sup> Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. *The Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Neslon Mandela* (Boston. Little Brown and Company, 1995). 507.

<sup>5</sup> For an understanding of the diverse nature of the US solidarity movement, see Richard Knight. "Documenting the US Solidarity Movement-With the reflections on the Sanctions and Divestment campaigns." Paper presented at the Conference *A Decade of Freedom*. University of KwaZulu-Natal. October 2004. Richard Knight was a US activist who was involved in the activities of the American Committee on Africa and is currently Project Director of the *African Activist Archive project*.

worked independently but closely with many national organizations in the USA and focused on a broad range of anti-apartheid activities. Hence my reference to civil society, solidarity groups and anti-apartheid organizations takes cognizance of this diversity in structure.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1980s, it was clear that the apartheid state had the most powerful global player on its side. Yet by 1986 the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act was passed in the USA, effectively repudiating Reagan's policy of constructive engagement in South Africa, in 1987 Shultz had met with Tambo and by 1990, the death knell of apartheid was sounded with the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela<sup>7</sup>. This was not accomplished purely through the efforts of a single entity such as the African National Congress or US civil society -a claim that has resulted in some tension between the liberation organization and the groups in the USA. While I do not intend to minimize the role of either segment, I will demonstrate that the successes generated required energies of both the ANC and civil society in what came to symbolize a symbiotic relationship. These developments must be viewed against the background of events in South Africa and the escalating pressure within the United States for stronger action against South Africa. The latter stemmed from the work of the Solidarity groups as well as pressure from Reagan's own establishment, which became increasingly embarrassed by their leader's recalcitrance on the issue of South Africa.

### ***A History not well Documented***

My research has indicated that the examination of the role of the South African Liberation Solidarity movement in the USA is critical in understanding how the work of this group was

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<sup>6</sup> This was evident from conversations with activists from the USA and the Nordic countries. Hence when writing this chapter, I considered it necessary to allude to such views and tensions.

<sup>7</sup> The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act was passed in 1986. The importance of this Act was that in the process of its passage, the US Congress overrode President Ronald Reagan's veto. This marked the first instance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where a President's foreign policy veto in the USA had been overridden. This Act introduced a package which included wide ranging sanctions against South Africa and a timeline for the ending of apartheid in South Africa. Another important component of the legislative package was an amendment that was included to pacify the conservative element in Washington. This stipulated that in the event of the apartheid state indicating a willingness to negotiate a democratic settlement **and that** should the ANC display reluctance or any unwillingness to participate or even renounce violence as a strategy, the US State may provide unqualified support for such a process-even without the ANC. Thomas J. Redden, Jr. "The US Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986: Anti-Apartheid of Anti-African National Congress." [African Affairs](#). 238.

linked to the struggles for justice throughout the world. This emanates from my conclusion that this is a history that is not well known nor well documented. Nor are its global dimensions understood except by those that were involved. According to William Minter, one of the more vocal members of this network, the history of the movement is one

that includes the world wide anti-apartheid movement, arguably one of the most significant transnational social movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century...a history that also reaches beyond South Africa, linking those involved in successive struggles against injustice on the African continent with others around the world who saw those struggles as integrally tied to their own.<sup>8</sup>

As very little has been written about the work of this movement much of the evidence for this study of the anti-apartheid network has been drawn from the secondary works of Janet Love, Robert Kinloch Massie, Francis Njubi Nesbitt, George Houser, Donald Culverson, Randall Robinson and the most recent work edited by William Minter, Gail Hovey and Charles Cobb Jr.. While Nesbitt in his study focused specifically on the role of African Americans in the anti-apartheid movement from 1946-1994, Massie provided an overview with some emphasis on the states in the Northeast. But in her study, Love, an activist, delineates case studies of activity at state or local level. Culver adopted a theoretical approach, applying the work of social movements to US anti-apartheid activism. He argued that since international developments guided US policy and interaction with the African continent, including South Africa, these engagements stimulated local action that found commonality between apartheid and US domestic challenges.

Randall Robinson, the President of Transafrica, used his memoir to highlight the relationship between racism and the structures of power in Washington, while at the same time allowing scholars a rare glimpse into the dynamics of anti-apartheid activism and the reasons for the success enjoyed in ending apartheid. Finally in contrast to the preceding works, the recent publication of Minter, Hovey and Cobb resorted to innovative methodology to tell the untold story of the national movement. They concentrated on the

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<sup>8</sup> William Minter, a veteran of anti-apartheid activity in the US, at a meeting of the *American Friends Services Committee*. 7 December 2002.

voices of those who were involved in the different activities. This focus on the slow agonizing process involved in forcing change in the US State Department, provides for a riveting study. But the strength of this study emerges in its arguments which illustrate the long connection” between African liberation and US activism,” which “preceded and shaped the anti-apartheid movement.”<sup>9</sup>

While this body of literature, through its varying area of foci, makes a significant contribution to the study of US solidarity, many gaps remain and clearly merit further scrutiny. But such a scrutiny cannot be undertaken in my study. However I have examined other data extracted from primary sources which included the various interviews with AAM and ANC activists, documents of Transafrica, documents of the Liberation Committee, and documents of the AAM conference hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal and media coverage.<sup>10</sup>

I would put forth the view that the anti-apartheid movement was important for the ANC in its attempts to advance the struggle on the international stage and to achieve recognition of being the legitimate liberation organization, harbouring the hopes of the oppressed majority. At the same time, I find it important to emphasize that it is not my intention in this chapter to undertake a study of AAM activities in the USA in the period under review. This would be rather short-sighted as mere chapter would certainly not allow me to do justice to such a

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<sup>9</sup> Janet Love. *The US Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics* (New York. Praeger, 1985); Robert Kinloch Massie. *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York. Doubleday, 1997); George Houser. *No One Can Stop the Rain* (New York. The Pilgrim Press, 1989); Donald Culverson. *Contesting Apartheid: US Activism, 1960-1987* (Colorado. Westview Press, 1999); Randall Robinson. *Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America* (New York. Plume, 1999); William Minter, Gail Hovey, Charles Cobb Jr. *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over Half a Century: 1950-2000* (Africa World Press. New Jersey, 2008); Francis Njubi Nesbitt. *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid* (Indiana. Indiana University Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> South Africa celebrated her decade of Freedom in 2004. As part of the National Celebrations, the Documentation Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, of which I was the Director, hosted a Conference in October 2004, which I Chaired, entitled *A Decade of Freedom: Celebrating the role of the International Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa's Liberation Struggle*. The aim of this conference, which brought together activists from 24 countries, represented an effort to generate discourse on the liberation struggle, through the conference discussions, oral history interviews, book launches and publications. Given the role of the International Solidarity Movement in South Africa's freedom struggle, very little research has been made available on the phenomenal work of this movement. This was due to the non-availability of research material or data required for an aggressive publication drive. Hence one of the aims of the conference was to generate such research which could make it possible for the role of the movement to be documented. For papers of the conference and other related data, see <http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/AAMwebsite>. These papers were acquired by the Documentation Centre between October and December 2004.

vital endeavour. My strategy instead would include a focus on examples of activity particularly on the East Coast, and in different periods to illustrate the commitment and effectiveness of such solidarity and to support my arguments.

### ***The Importance of the Early Networks***

Looking at the early years, sources suggest that the American solidarity network was the successor of the number of domestic African American networks which assisted in the early years in placing the activities of the ANC on the USA's platform. These networks can be traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century back to Africa movements, the Council on African Affairs, founded in 1937 as the International Committee on African Affairs, the African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) Church with its programmes of transatlantic exchanges and the American Committee on Africa founded in 1953 under George Houser. The work of the AME resulted in an interesting phenomenon where three of the ANC's leaders who held positions before 1960 were trained in the USA.<sup>11</sup>

But from the mid 1950s to about the time of the Sharpeville uprisings, these informal contacts between the ANC and US groups and individuals began to decline. Evidence for this came from the very founder of the ACOA himself- George Houser. He attributed the decline to two factors: the failure of the ANC to prove that it had the potential to succeed; secondly the split in the ANC in 1957 forced such groups to choose the factions that they were going to support.<sup>12</sup> But Tom Karis and Gail Gerhart have argued that regardless of these factors, anti-apartheid activists and African-Americans had very little affect on official state policy up to the 1970s. It was only towards the end of the decade, they argue, that African-American leaders began to exert any significant influence on their country's policies.<sup>13</sup> While I would agree with these views, I would further argue that evidence exists to

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<sup>11</sup> They were John Dube, Pixley Seme and AB Xuma.

<sup>12</sup> John Douglas Nelson. "Some Aspects of Internal Conflict within South Africa: A Study of the Place of International Activities in the Development of the African National Congress." Ph.D dissertation (George Washington University, 1975). 181.

<sup>13</sup> 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 (Pretoria. UNISA Press, 1997). Amongst others Karis and Gerhart based their conclusions on the fact that African-Americans comprised only 12% of

support the view that while US activists may not have been successful in swaying US state policy in the 1970s, they were effective in creating awareness of the South African cause and of the African National Congress. For example, strategies such as pressure on banks, proved highly successful.

### ***US Activism in the 1970s***

Considered by many to be the authorities or progressives on ANC/SA linkages at this time, Karis and Gerhart have argued in 1997 that African-American support for the anti-apartheid movement was very low, basing their conclusions on the fact that African-Americans comprised only 12% of the population. Hence given this percentage, on their own, this segment of US society could not be given credit for any effective action until the end of the decade. However evidence unearthed does not support their conclusions. I argue that by the 1970s the infrastructure was already in place for anti-apartheid activity on the part of different entities which included the churches, unions, state and local authorities and the United Nations. The success of these movements also depended on their reaction to South African events and on their abilities to draw more supporters for their work.<sup>66</sup> Evidence provided through actions which saw 10 000 black people march in Washington on Africa Liberation Day, 27 May 1972, to express solidarity with South African liberation movements clearly demonstrates this. Such actions were received with enthusiasm by activists involved with the ACOA and others such as Cecelie Counts especially since this brought African-Americans into the solidarity fold.<sup>14</sup>

This view was also echoed by Claude Lightfoot, the African-American leader and representative to the World Peace Council Commission on the struggle against racism in the USA. In the same year he sent a message to Sechaba, in which he admitted that while there was not much understanding in the past, on the part of African-Americans, of the liberation

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the population. Hence given this percentage, on their own they could not be given credit for any effective action until the end of the decade.

<sup>14</sup> This emerged in the interview undertaken with Cecelie Counts, founding member of the *Southern Africa Summer Project*, 30 November 2002. Washington DC. See also Thomas Karis. "United States Policy towards South Africa," in Gwendolen Carter and Patrick O' Meara(eds.). *Southern Africa: The Continuing Crisis* (Bloomington. Indiana University Press, 1979). 337.

struggle, by 1972 there was a more focused interest in the South African struggle. He attributed this interest and understanding to, among others, the work of the Congressional Black Caucus.<sup>15</sup>

This comment allows me to pause briefly at this juncture to reflect on why activists should be encouraged by this. From the research gathered from interviews in Washington and New York, it would appear that such attitudes were associated with the issue of racial balances of solidarity groups. During these interviews which were conducted with activists from both sides of the racial spectrum, one interviewee candidly spoke out on the related tensions that arose through this issue.<sup>16</sup> It may have also been the source of some discord after Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 when both white and African-Americans activists each claimed greater participation. A further example of this was provided by Nelson Mandela's first visit to the USA in 1990 when it was claimed that 'white' activists had easier access to him than did 'African-American' activists. On the other hand, 'white' activists complained that a post apartheid South Africa failed to recognize their work while giving more credit to 'African-Americans'<sup>17</sup>. At the invitation of Nelson Mandela in 1991, a group of activists undertook a tour to South Africa. The group consisted of 33 African-American activists led by Randall Robinson of Transafrica.<sup>18</sup> This aggravated the situation. Upon trying to ascertain whether most activists would share similar views, I was unsuccessful because they were reluctant to comment on this.

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<sup>15</sup> *Sechaba*. Vol.6. No. 8, 8 August 1972. In 1972, the Caucus held a conference in Washington-which was the result of the Black political Convention held at Gary, Indiana-where an overwhelming majority of African Americans was represented. Here Lightfoot assured the ANC that "the struggle waged by our black brothers and sisters in the Southern part of the African continent is directly connected with the mainstream of the battle of the Afro-American people for liberation"

<sup>16</sup> These interviewees included those interviewed in December 2002 on the East Coast. This particular interviewee informed me that this part of the interview should be off the record and that if I alluded to it in my study, then he should be listed as an anonymous interviewee. This strategy was offered to prevent his views creating a schism in the work of the movement.

<sup>17</sup> This was also shared with me by the late Beryl Baker who was the PA of then ANC President, Nelson Mandela in the offices of the ANC. Notes of conversations of 1997. She indicated that she often received letters of complaint from activists and organizations who shared these concerns.

<sup>18</sup> William Minter and Sylvia Hill. "Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States-South Africa Relations: From the Margins to the Mainstream" in Greg Houston(ed.). The Road to Democracy. Vol 3. International Solidarity Part 1 and Part 2 (Pretoria. UNISA, 2008). 820.

William Minter, a veteran of anti-apartheid solidarity work, in a recent interview provided an informed and candid perspective of this issue. He explained that no one group was more prominent or visible than the other, but factors such as the period, roles, media presence and representation and 'ideological regions' may have influenced visibility and activity.<sup>19</sup> In fact in a chapter contribution made by both himself and Sylvia Hill to the most recent SADET volume, they tried to provide some perspective on the racial balance.<sup>20</sup> Also Minter drew my attention to the selection of interviews conducted for his recent publication, *No Easy Victories*, pointing out rather eloquently that "we did this not just out of some 'political correctness' of racial balance but because in fact the history was that way."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Although William Minter was interviewed by me in 2002, this interview was undertaken via e-mail on 21 August 2008. I put forward questions to him in this regard and he sent through written response outlining his thoughts.

<sup>20</sup> See Greg Houston. [Road to Democracy Vol 3.](#)

<sup>21</sup> See Minter, Hovey and Cobb. [No Easy Victories.](#)

**Table 1: Major Area of Focus for work of Solidarity Movements.**<sup>22</sup>

Type of Activity	Targets of activity	Strategy Used	Group Involved
SANCTIONS	Government Organisations-all levels; Businesses; Non-Governmental Investors such as Universities, Churches, Private Trusts; Sports Organisations; Entertainers and artists; Academic Associations and Scholars.	Lobbying: Letters to and negotiations/discussions with decision makers; Press Conferences and other media work; public release of confidential documents; attendance at key events such as shareholder meetings; demonstrations, picketing; shareholder resolutions.	Churches University groups Labour Unions Black Organisations Other Community Groups; Groups organised specifically for local and national anti-apartheid work.
DIRECT AID	Governmental Organisations-national and international; NGOs and individuals.	Lobbying; Letters and calls to decision makers; Demonstrations; Fund raising benefits; Assisting political refugees; Direct procurement of funds.	Groups organised specifically for anti-apartheid work.
EDUCATION	Leaders of campaigns; Decision makers in targeted organisations.	Use of film; Provision of speakers for lobbying events; Educational activities such as seminars; demonstrations; distribution of publications, leaflets and other literature.	Groups organised specifically for anti-apartheid work
RESEARCH PUBLICATION/MEDIA	Those being mobilised into anti-apartheid campaigns; Leaders of campaigns; Decision makers in some of the targeted organisations.	Publication of pamphlets, newsletters, books; Production of film and records; Research on economic, military, political, social conditions in Southern Africa; business relations between Southern Africa and the West; other types of relationships between SA and West; anti-apartheid strategies and tactics.	Groups organised specifically for anti-apartheid work.

<sup>22</sup> This table was produced by Janet Love for her study [The US Anti-Apartheid Movement](#). It was a useful summary of the work and strategy of the movements which I have used for this study as well.

In regard to universities which were most often sites of struggle and played leading roles in the divestment campaigns, I drew Minter's attention to the predominantly white composition of those groups. While he agreed, he provided a simple rationale for this. White students rather than African-American students comprised the larger segment of university population in the USA.. Drawing on my own experience at USA universities in the 1980s I could concur with this view.

A very effective yet unusual source of civil society activity could be discerned from the work of the Churches who enjoyed considerable success in their campaigns particularly against banks in the USA. I traced evidence of their role back to the 1960s, beginning with 1966 when Protestant denominations withdrew about \$23 million in deposits from 10 banks, including Citibank. This was done in protest at American banks enthusiasm to make loans available to South Africa. In view of the negative publicity surrounding such protest action, American banks did not renew loan agreements with South Africa, pointing out that South Africa no longer needed the funds. But such success was of a temporary nature for it was soon discovered that the banks began to make secret agreements with South Africa. These secret loans were uncovered in 1973 through the vigilance of ant-apartheid activists who learned through the "Frankfurt Documents" sent to ICCR, that American banks were making loans available to South Africa through the European-American Banking Corporation<sup>23</sup>. Given this discovery, campaigns against the Banks were renewed.

The role of the World Council of Churches (WCC), which had a number of branches in the USA merits particular scrutiny because it played a decisive role in boosting the support and recognition that the ANC began to draw in this period. According to W. P. Esterhuyse, the WCC, "more than any other non-governmental organisation, contributed to legitimizing the ANC as a liberation organisation, by justifying its use of violence."<sup>24</sup> Beside moral support, the WCC provided financial assistance to the ANC. In 1987, R300 000 was furnished as aid

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<sup>23</sup> Love. US Anti-Apartheid Movement. 29.

<sup>24</sup> W. P. Esterhuyse, "The International Political Status of the African National Congress," in Africa Insight. Vol 19. No.1, 1989. 32. In many debates on the issue of the use of violence, the WCC argued that it was the apartheid state which should shoulder blame for the use of violence, for "violence is an in-built quality of the South African state against which the oppressed have no other option than to defend themselves".

to the ANC. The WCC's support and recognition of the ANC as well as its use of violence, contributed towards world churches adopting a more sympathetic attitude towards the liberation movement-this again further enhanced the status of the ANC in the eyes of the international community.

That the power of the Churches to influence public opinion was great was even recognised by the apartheid protagonists themselves. In a confidential dossier of anti-South Africa activities, compiled by the then South African Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. J. van Dalsen, it was pointed out that the churches played an “opinion forming role” in the United States and that the churches “are still active in their animosity towards South Africa” The dossier provided vital evidence on the power of the churches, their strategies and their partners. From this dossier, one learned that the prime goal of these Churches was to concentrate their efforts on influencing the investment policy of US firms in South Africa. Specific reference was made to letters of protest received by the South African embassy in the US from the United Presbyterian Church and the United Congregational Church at the expropriation of the Seminary at Fort Hare.<sup>25</sup> According to Dalsen, those churches concerned with interfering with investments in South Africa included eleven of those with a total membership of 53 646 200 individuals.<sup>26</sup>

Evidence also provided that window of understanding how Churches worked with other bodies in protest against apartheid policies. Those organisations identified as having links with the Church activities and of subsequently interfering with the internal affairs of South Africa included the *African-American Institute*, *The American Committee on Africa*, *the Washington Office on Africa*, *the Apartheid Committee of the United Nations* and *The House of Representatives Subcommittee on Food Resources and Energy and the African Studies Association*.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Report of Secretary of Foreign Affairs entitled “Anti-South African Activities: United States of America”, June 1976, Foreign Affairs Files, 1/33/3, 109/5.

<sup>26</sup> These Churches included the National Council of the Churches of Christ, The National Baptist Convention of the USA, The American Baptists Convention, The United Methodist Church, The Lutheran Church, The United Presbyterian Church, The Protestant Episcopal Church, The International Convention of the Disciples of Christ, The Reformed Church in America, The United Church of Christ and The Zion Baptist Church.

<sup>27</sup> “Anti-South African Activities,” Foreign Affairs Files.

Other sectors that were targeted by and became part of the solidarity network in the 1970s included state and local governments. But it was only in the 1980s that they were successful in pressurizing these institutions to withdraw funds from businesses operating in South Africa. In cases such as those of Washington DC and Gary, Indiana, their actions were significant. Janet Love has identified these councils as being the first to adopt anti-apartheid resolutions. The latter included calls for the boycott of purchases of city services and supplies from specific companies doing business with South Africa.<sup>28</sup> Similar action was followed by the cities of Madison (1976), Berkeley (1979), and Davis (1978). By the early 1980s, of the 27 local councils ‘entertaining’ anti-apartheid policies, 22 passed one or more pieces of anti-apartheid legislation.<sup>29</sup>

In 1971 the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Union (P.R.W.M) embarked on a struggle to pressure the Polaroid Corporation to end all trade with South Africa. They went to great lengths to point out that that they “see the South African apartheid system as the symbol of the many inhumanities in the United States...and we cannot begin to deal with racism in Polaroid or the US until Polaroid and the US cease to uphold and support apartheid.”<sup>30</sup> While the final outcomes of their actions were not significant for African employees of the South African subsidiary, such actions spurred other organizations to act. Following this, General Motors came under attack from anti-apartheid lobbyists and Automobile Union officials. In February the Rand Daily Mail reported on the visit to South Africa of a Senior GM executive to work out a “Polaroid type” deal to respond to calls that it should cease business activities with the apartheid state.<sup>31</sup>

It was not unusual to also discover the existence of US organisations that were positioned on the right and that failed to even have an unexpected impact. An example of this was the African-American Institute (AAI) whose name emerged in many of the interviews undertaken with solidarity activists as being a front organisation for the CIA. In an interview with Frank Ferrari in 2002, the Vice-President and Acting President of the Institute, he

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<sup>28</sup> By 1975, there were 43 such councils who adopted anti-apartheid legislation.

<sup>29</sup> Love. *US Anti-Apartheid Movement*. 43.

<sup>30</sup> *Sechaba*. Vol.5. No. 5, May 1971.

<sup>31</sup> *Rand Daily Mail* (12 February 1971). See also Karis. “United States Policy Towards South Africa.” 335.

explained that the organisation was the oldest and largest private body that focused on Africa in the USA since the 1950's, with specific emphasis on education for Africans in the US at the time.<sup>32</sup> A key feature of this interview was that, while Ferrari generously made his time available, he dwelt at some length on extolling the virtues of AAI without reflecting critically on whether the organisation was effective. While Ferrari alluded to CIA funding before 1962, he was emphatic that such a situation changed after 1962. But activist groups and organisations were not convinced. This was clear in the conversations undertaken. By the 1980s groups such as churches, which were severely underfunded, had a huge impact on solidarity activity whereas front organisations such as the AAI which received massive funding boosts failed to do so nor was their leadership considered credible enough by the activist community.

While it would appear that the anti-apartheid movement enjoyed recognisable success in the early 1970s, their work was not easy. This was clear from the ACOA's difficult call upon its own staff as well as members of other organizations to be "travelling evangelists," to address legislatures, city councils and education events organized by activists, and to distribute newsletters nationally. But as I learned from my interviews with grassroots activists, a common complaint from this quarter was that they did not get enough assistance or support from national organizations, allowing me to conclude that tensions between the different segments, whether local or national, did exist.<sup>33</sup> This was confirmed at the Conference held at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2004.<sup>34</sup>

While the UN general Assembly remained sympathetic to the liberation movements' cause, I would argue that in the Security Council this was not possible. This was due to a legacy where major Western nations such as the US, Britain and France enjoyed the powers of veto

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Frank Ferrari. New York, 11 December 2002. Ferrari left the institute in 1996. Hence when interviewed, he was no longer affiliated to the AAI. This may have created the opportunity for him to reflect in an objective fashion about the work of the institute. But this did not happen. Folder 2.

<sup>33</sup> This emerged in the series of interviews I conducted with many activists of national bodies as well as grassroots activists in December 2002. They included interviews with the following: Salih Booker of the Africa Action group in Washington, William Minter of the Africa Focus Group, Cecelie Counts of the AFL-CIO and formerly of Transafrica and the Free South Africa Movement, Richard Knight of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), and Jennifer Davis of ACOA.

<sup>34</sup> <http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/AAMwebsite>.

and as such made it difficult to expect any significant action from this quarter against South Africa. But on its own, in 1973, the General Assembly denounced apartheid as a “crime against humanity,” and in so doing, prevented South Africa from participating in plenary sessions since 1974.<sup>35</sup> So I would join Janet Love in cautioning scholars against being too critical of the UN. Moreso since this body has been an important source of funds and other aid for guerrilla movements in Southern Africa. Reference has been made to the different programmes established in the 1960s as a result of pressure from African and Asian governments. These included the Trust Fund for South Africa, the Educational Programme for Southern Africa and the Fund for Namibia. It has been found that from 1965 to 1980; the Trust Fund for Southern Africa distributed 95 grants with a value of \$10.47 million.

In 1974, the United Nations passed Resolution 3411 G (xxx), recognizing “the liberation movements as the authentic representatives of the South African people.”<sup>36</sup> Clearly such official recognition represented a political and diplomatic breakthrough for an organisation determined to succeed in drawing the attention of the international arena to its dilemmas. The significance of this resolution has spurred scholars such as William Steyn to undertake an intense analysis of such actions. Steyn has been helpful in clarifying that this recognition did not mean official government recognition by member states. Also, by making specific reference to liberation movements, it demonstrated acceptance of the ANC as well as of other South African liberation movements such as the PAC. The UN was careful not to recognize the ANC as the only liberation movement representing the political aspirations of South African blacks. This meant then that the ANC was in a different and weaker position than SWAPO.<sup>37</sup> But Steyn has provided evidence to indicate that the status accorded to the ANC was very high. The fact that it was given observer status in the General Assembly and Security Council implied that that it was provided not only with a favourable chance to participate in discussions on South Africa, but also with the opportunity to play an active role in resolutions passed by the United Nations on the apartheid state.

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<sup>35</sup> Love. *US Anti-Apartheid Movement*. 4.

<sup>36</sup> W. P. Esterhuysen. “The International Political Status of the African National Congress”, in *Africa Insight*. Vol. 19. No. 1, 1989. 31.

<sup>37</sup> In relation to SWAPO, the UN recognised this movement as the sole liberation movement in Namibia. This view placed the ANC in a somewhat weaker position than the Namibian liberation movement.

### ***US Media in the Aftermath of Soweto***

My study of US media coverage of South Africa in the post 1976 period has proved to be a valuable exercise as it has yielded some interesting evidence on how interest in South Africa outside of the State department could be gauged. It has also served to strengthen my view that activists and other anti-apartheid entities were successful, through their activities, in creating awareness in the USA of the plight of South Africa's majority and of the work of major liberation movements such as the ANC.

Aside from focusing on South Africa after major events such as Sharpeville, from the 1960s to the early 1970s, it was common practice for all articles about Africa to be relegated to the least desirable sections of newspapers and magazines. But after 1976, a change occurred and there appeared to be a growing interest in South Africa on the part of the American media, but it did not mean that uprisings such as SOWETO played a critical role in swaying state policy towards the ANC, as I have previously argued.<sup>38</sup> For example in 1980, South Africa found itself in the midst of disturbances, which resulted through the commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the Soweto uprisings of 1976. *Time* magazine and *Newsweek*, both carried lead stories about South Africa in their international sections. In the report presented by the former, focus was devoted to the spread of violence to various urban centers and Coloured areas. The perception of the violence was as follows:

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<sup>38</sup> See correspondence from Keyan Tomaselli to Lindiwe Mabuza, Chief Representative of the ANC in Washington, 11 July 1990. Tomaselli was a Visiting Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill during which time a research project and report was completed by students and staff of the University's Department of Radio, Television and Motion Pictures. The report focused on how the US media covered events in South Africa. The report was titled "Nelson Mandela and the US Media: Implications for South African Foreign Policy," A copy of this correspondence, which can also be found in the Washington Mission Office records of the ANC at Fort Hare, is in the possession of the author of this study. Folder 6. The copy was furnished by Mr. Moore Crossey of the Yale University Library. The document is an important source for understanding the US media landscape of the period from 1970-1990.

The new outbreak came after increasing protest and turmoil in recent months. The government's promised reforms, ranging from a gradual phasing out of the hated passbook system to a plan for enabling blacks to buy their own homes, have either not materialized or largely failed. Organisers of the African National Congress, the outlawed Black political movement, operate with increasing ease.<sup>39</sup>

*Newsweek* provided the title of "Shooting to Kill in South Africa" to its report. In trying to uncover the reasons for the school boycott by Coloured students, the magazine pointed out that "the new surge of unrest was a dose of particularly unpleasant medicine" for Prime Minister PW Botha. "He had been seeking to humanize the face of apartheid," but the boycotts were clearly warning that black and Coloured South Africans wanted more than he was ready to give.<sup>40</sup> In other related stories, *Time* interviewed Gerrit Viljoen, the Head of the Broederbond and *Newsweek* provided a profile on Joe Slovo.<sup>41</sup>

Looking at coverage provided by the US daily newspapers of such events, I found that when these demonstrations occurred in 1980, correspondents from most newspapers were present to file extensive reports. Front page articles and in many instances, headline stories appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Most reports painted a picture of a crisis situation afflicting the country. The story in the *Washington Post* was written, with much of the information coming from the South African Press Association. This indicated that for the first time South African police tried to stop foreign correspondents from accessing the sites of these disturbances to provide firsthand accounts.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Time* (30 June 1980). "South African: Nights of Rage and Gunfire".

<sup>40</sup> *Newsweek* (30 June 1980). "Shooting to Kill in South Africa".

<sup>41</sup> The Broederbond was an Afrikaner secret society. For nearly every month of that year, reports on South Africa appeared in such news magazines featuring amongst others, warnings of continued isolation of South Africa from the international community, a repetition of the turbulence of Rhodesia in South Africa, and a race war. On the Broederbond, see Hermann Giliomee. *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (London. Hurst and Company, 2003)

<sup>42</sup> *Washington Post* (27 October 1979). "Nuclear Whodunnit." Editorials in major American newspapers also devoted much space to coverage of South African events. In December 1979, the *New York Times* drew attention to the plight of 80 000 blacks who were forced into undesirable resettlement areas against their will. This situation, pointed out by the *Times*, illustrated "the cruel costs" of South African's dreams of an all white nation<sup>42</sup>. In October 1979, in the midst of the uproar over the possible nuclear explosion, the *Post* editorialized that "the very thought of the ruling white minority in Pretoria would secretly equip itself with a nuclear bomb...is chilling"

The handling of the South African problems by commercial television networks was difficult to gauge. But according to Sanford Ungar who conducted a survey of South Africa in the American media, it was found through a computer check at ABC that during the first eleven months of 1980, there had been 27 references to South Africa on “the World News Tonight.”<sup>43</sup> But the picture was different in public broadcasting coverage where South Africa featured prominently in the in-depth discussions of foreign policy on the nightly “McNeil Lehrer Report.” Records of National Public Radio (NPR) reveal that from October 1978-March 1980, there were about 86 pieces about South Africa. This brought the monthly average to about five. Reports consisted of pieces from a part-time correspondent based in Johannesburg or an interview with an observer of events for about five minutes. Since March 1980, the coverage by NPR on South Africa increased further.

The conclusion to be drawn from this assessment of the coverage provided by the American media is that correspondents, through their respective newspapers, provided a very negative view of the apartheid state. Their views demonstrated their intense hostility to apartheid and their impatience for a time when all South Africans may enjoy the process of one-man-one-vote. However it is vital to recognise that while the media establishment remained highly critical of the intolerable racial problems in South Africa, it remained resolute in its rejection of violence as a means to achieving majority rule in South Africa. For Ungar, on the question of whether Americans could get an accurate analysis of the South African dilemma, one thing was certain-it was “far easier to learn about South African from the American media than to learn about any other country or issues in sub-Saharan Africa.”<sup>44</sup>

### ***Opportunities for US Activism in the 1980s***

While these different sectors helped advance the ANC’s struggle in the ANC, I contend that it was events in the USA between 1981 and 1984 that moved the ANC’s attempts to establish a relationship with the US and the work of the activists to a whole new level. In this

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<sup>43</sup> Sanford Ungar. “South Africa in the American Media,” in Alfred Hero, Jr. and John Barratt (ed.). The American People and South Africa (Lexington, D.C. Heath and Co., 1981). 38. This programme was the network’s prime time news programme. This was compared to 126 mentions of Europe during the same period.

<sup>44</sup> Ungar. “South Africa in the American Media.” .43.

regards I would focus on May 1981 which proved to be critical for this process. It also acted as a catalyst that was needed by the USA anti-apartheid activists to legitimize their actions within the ambit of mainstream American politics. In that month, Randall Robinson of Transafrica received a phone call from a US State Department official who wished to remain anonymous, but who offered to drop off classified state department documents that described the framework for a new alliance between the USA and South Africa. The significance of this framework which will be elaborated upon later in this chapter. That this phone call changed the tide of developments was undeniable. Suffice at this point to add that the following points in these documents leaked to Robinson encapsulated the trend of US policy towards South Africa on the one hand and the African National Congress on the other.

We want to open a new chapter in relations with South Africa---We will not allow others to dictate what our relations with South Africa will be --we may continue to differ on apartheid--but we can cooperate ---our cooperative relationship would also recognize the key economic role played by South Africa in the region....<sup>45</sup>

Barely three years later on 21 November 1984, Randall Robinson, Mary Frances Berry, a member of the US Civil Rights Commission, Congressman Walter Fauntroy, and Elinor Holmes Norton, a Georgetown University Law Professor, entered the South African embassy in Washington on the pretext of keeping a meeting with the Ambassador. Their true intention was to stage a sit in and court arrest.<sup>46</sup> They were successful in this endeavour. Following their release from prison on thanksgiving morning, they announced the founding of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) whose principle objective was to secure the passage of the comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa.

What happened between these two events is critical in understanding firstly how the different relationships evolved and secondly the issues that galvanized the anti-apartheid movement into action. Reagan was inaugurated as President of the United States in January

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<sup>45</sup> Verbatim Text of Document furnished by *Transafrica*, 4 December 2002; See also *Transafrica News Report Special Edition*, August 1981.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Muzwai Muntali, activist and staff member of *Transafrica*, 4 December 2002, Washington DC. Folder 3.

1981. Only four months later on 27 May 1981, Randall Robinson received that visit from the anonymous state department official (alluded to earlier on) who urged the Transafrica leader to “use them [the documents] as you see fit” as “this is a terrible and indefensible thing the administration is doing here...”<sup>47</sup> “Mindful that the disclosure of sensitive policy materials is not a matter to be taken lightly,” Robinson felt it necessary to “encourage broad public debate” by making the documents available to the *Washington Post* the very next morning. Within two days the papers were authenticated by the State Department and the *Post* ran the story a day later.<sup>48</sup> A week later the story made its way into international newspapers. At this point it might be pertinent to raise the question of why the release of such documentation was considered vital to advancing the cause of the struggle in South Africa.

I would argue that while the documents themselves contained texts of classified State Department memoranda which described discussions and preparations for talks between American and South African foreign policy officials, their importance could be discerned from the evidence they provided on why South Africa continued with its belligerent behaviour and wanton debauchery. They also provided evidence of how the interests of the country’s oppressed majority were sacrificed for the goal of restoring South Africa to “international respectability and a role in the western alliance.”<sup>49</sup>

### ***The Unholy Partnership***

The documents provided vital proof of discussions held at a meeting which took place in Pretoria between 15-16 April 1981, at which the South African foreign Minister, Pik Botha, South African Defence Minister Magnus Malan, US Assistant Secretary-designate Chester Crocker and State Department official Alan Keyes were present. From the Memorandum of the conversation that took place, it was apparent that three issues dominated the discussions. They were the issue of ‘trust’ between the two countries, the Soviet problem and Namibia. Botha raised the first issue within the context of the press reports which had appeared since the November election in the US and to which Crocker referred to as ‘misinformation and

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<sup>47</sup> Randall Robinson. *Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America* (New York: Plume, 1999). 129.

<sup>48</sup> Muntali Interview, 4 December 2002.

<sup>49</sup> *Transafrica News Report* (August 1981).

disinformation” on the part of the media.<sup>50</sup> Crocker was of the view that South African distrust of the US grew out of the “1975-1976 experience and the Carter period.”<sup>51</sup>

In an attempt to alleviate further suspicion of American intentions, the Assistant Secretary of State provided assurances by alluding to a change in American public opinion on foreign policy since the Reagan victory—thus reversing the trend of the post Vietnam years—pointing to the possibility of improved relations between the US and SA. Botha’s response to this was to request that there be no repeat of Walter Mondale’s “one-man-one vote” statement.<sup>52</sup> South Africa’s assistance was sought in combating Soviet influence in the region and cooperation in resolving the Namibian dilemma. The meeting was concluded with an invitation to Botha to visit the US.

From the briefing documents for the proposed meeting to be held in May 1981 at the State Department in Washington, it was apparent that Secretary of State Alexander Haig would sit with Pik Botha to continue the discussions began by Crocker in Pretoria a month before, on the new era of friendship between the USA and South Africa. It was expected that Haig would offer US assistance to “work to end South Africa’s polecat status in the world and seek to restore its place as a legitimate and important regional actor with whom we can cooperate.”<sup>53</sup> Drafted by the new Assistant Secretary of State, the new strategy was adopted as a mechanism to draw the US away from “confrontation” and into a “watershed relationship of ‘constructive engagement.’”<sup>54</sup>

At the same time I would contend that this new strategy was a significant point in guiding the strategies of the ANC and of the Solidarity groups. For the anti-apartheid groups, “each time the US and South African governments did something, it created new opportunities for

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<sup>50</sup> *Transafrica News Report* (August 1981).

<sup>51</sup> *Transafrica News Report* (August 1981).

<sup>52</sup> In 1977, Vice President of the Carter administration, Walter Mondale met with John Vorster in Vienna from 9-20 May. This was the first senior level contact between Carter’s administration and the apartheid state. During the meeting Mondale demanded “full participation by all of its [South Africa’s] citizens on an equal basis.” In a press conference Mondale pointed out that there was no difference between full participation and ‘One-man-one-vote’.

<sup>53</sup> From verbatim text furnished by *Transafrica*.

<sup>54</sup> Robinson. *Defending the Spirit*. 131.

us to do something new and to expand our coalition.”<sup>55</sup> This statement is important in understanding the strategy of US Solidarity groups and the success they finally secured. It also allows me to reflect on a remark made by a Reagan Campaign assistant during the campaign year with regard to the Reagan’s knowledge of Southern Africa. “The problem with Reagan,” he added, “is that all he knows about Southern Africa is that he’s on the side of the whites.”<sup>56</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, one can only argue for the profound significance of this observation which perhaps encapsulates the policy of “constructive engagement” towards the apartheid regime.

In a nationally televised interview with Walter Cronkite on CBS, undertaken six weeks after his inauguration, Reagan described South Africa as a “friendly nation, a country of strategic consequence to the free world and a wartime ally.”<sup>57</sup> On the issue of her being a “friendly nation,” comment is unnecessary. His reference to her “strategic consequence” was perhaps not unusual as this area remained the guiding factor in determining the parameters of the US-SA relationship over the years. Perceptions of South Africa’s strategic value emerged at different fora and in numerous discussions. For example, in 1977, the influential news bulletin, *Dines Letter*, reported that “South Africa is emerging as a new and unpredictable giant, and will inevitably become a superpower.”<sup>58</sup> This deduction was based on the fact that the country controlled 40 percent of the world’s uranium reserves, which the publication considered to be “the fuel of the future” and 70 percent of the world’s gold reserves which it identified as the “money of the future.”<sup>59</sup> In addition, the news bulletin pointed to the availability of an abundance of land, cheap labour and a combination of “British and Dutch brainpower which it argued were all the vital ingredients of an “economic explosion.”<sup>60</sup> As for being a “wartime” ally, the presidential aides should have briefed him on the pro-Nazi sentiment displayed by Afrikaners.

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Cecelie Counts, founding member of the *Southern Africa Summer Project*, 30 November 2002, Washington DC. Folder 2.

<sup>56</sup> *News Report Special Edition* (August 1981).

<sup>57</sup> Robinson. *Defending the Spirit*, 137.

<sup>58</sup> Daan Prinsloo. *United States Foreign Policy and the Republic of South Africa* (Pretoria. Foreign Policy Association, 1978). 119. This Newsletter was circulated to businessmen and stock exchange investors throughout the US.

<sup>59</sup> Prinsloo. *United States Foreign Policy and the Republic of South Africa*. 119.

<sup>60</sup> Prinsloo. *United States Foreign Policy and the Republic of South Africa*. 119.

### ***Constructive Engagement and its Impact on US Activism and the ANC***

Reagan's 'constructive engagement' policy which was used as a framework for US policy towards the Third World, had its roots in the Kissinger years, and was clearly expounded by Kissinger during his testimony to the Foreign Relations Committee in 1975, during which he explained the shift in US policy.<sup>61</sup> For the new administration, the events unfolding on the African continent caused much consternation. The collapse of Portuguese rule in Mozambique and Angola had serious repercussions for the Rhodesian dilemma. The pace of resistance activity in South Africa was spurred on by these events as well as by those victories secured through armed struggle in Algeria, Cuba, China and Vietnam. All of these developments, together with the events in Iran still fresh in the minds of the new administration, it was not surprising to learn that the events in Africa were looked upon as being urgent and loaded with global repercussions.<sup>62</sup>

Making the apartheid state a partner in its quest to direct the course of events and developments in the Southern African region proved to be dangerous to the African states in the region, to the activities for resistance movements such as the African National Congress and to the Solidarity movements within the United States. Equally dangerous was the team which Reagan selected to assist him in the pursuit of his strategic plan for the continent. The team included staunch anti-communists such as the First Foreign Secretary, General Haig whose views on race "put him in the same clubroom with the South African military" and who "would quietly pretend to beat drums on the table" when African Affairs were brought up for discussion.<sup>63</sup>

Even more pertinent to this discussion on the unholy partnership was the influence of the "Reagan Doctrine." While 'Constructive Engagement' has been used as a framework for the understanding of Reagan's policy towards Africa, it was the "Reagan Doctrine" that shaped US policy towards all parts of the globe, including Southern Africa. This policy which was

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<sup>61</sup> Mohammed A. El-Khawas (ed.). National Security Study Memorandum 39. The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa (Westpoint. Lawrence Hill, 1976). 24

<sup>62</sup> This is a reference to the hostage crisis in Iran.

<sup>63</sup> *The New Statesman* (3 April 1981).10.

developed when the new administration took office in 1981, and which went further than the traditional confines of ‘containment’ of the Soviet Union, remained secret until the spring of 1985. For Sean Gervasi and Sybil Wong, who undertook a critical analysis of this ‘Doctrine’, it was under the terms of this policy that the US in the 1980s “became involved in covert operations, proxy wars, counter insurgencies and ‘stability operations’ around the world.”<sup>64</sup> And it was this policy that led the US in a secret alliance with the apartheid state to “wage unconventional warfare against the front line states” of the region.<sup>65</sup> It was within the context of this framework that Reagan decided on a position that would be supportive of South Africa, while encouraging the latter to move towards “non-racial liberal democracy” through the introduction of moderate reforms. He also pledged to assist in the process of resisting all attempts, including that by the United Nations, to isolate South Africa. In relation to activities in the region, the President decided that it would be in both their interests to maintain strict secrecy about “active collaboration” in support of South Africa and about certain actions taken against the frontline states.<sup>66</sup>

What emerges from these statements is that Reagan, throughout his terms of office, was consistently out of touch with political realities. As late as March 1985 he claimed that the violence in South Africa resulted from “blacks fighting against blacks, because there’s still a tribal situation involved there in that community.”<sup>67</sup> This was not lost on influential senators in his administration, and this included Richard Lugar, Nancy Kassebaum and Robert Dole who cautioned Reagan on many occasions on the effect of his South African views on the domestic front. The latter did finally recognize the need for a new foreign policy decision on this issue, acknowledging that “there’s a lot of politics involved. This has now become a domestic civil rights issue.”<sup>68</sup>

All of these developments as well as the public pronouncements on policy coming out of the USA, such as those elucidated by the President in his interview, clearly sent positive signals

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<sup>64</sup> Sean Gervasi and Sybil Wong: “The Reagan Doctrine and the Destabilization of Southern Africa”, in A. George. *Western State Terrorism* (Oxford. Polity Press, 1991). 221.

<sup>65</sup> Gervasi and Wong. “The Reagan Doctrine and the Destabilization of Southern Africa.” 221.

<sup>66</sup> Gervasi and Wong. “The Reagan Doctrine and the Destabilization of Southern Africa.” 225.

<sup>67</sup> *New York Times* (March 22, 1985).

<sup>68</sup> Lugar was Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, Kassebaum was Chair of the Sub-Committee on African Affairs and Dole was Majority leader. In Culver. *Contesting Apartheid*. 133.

to the South Africans in Pretoria. This was heightened by the many instances of contact between state officials in Washington and government officials in SA-as indicated by the leaked state department documents.

On 9 March 1981, five senior members of the South African military intelligence met with officials of the National Security Council and Defence Intelligence agency in Washington. The South African delegation included Lt. General P. van der Westhuizen, the Chief of South African military intelligence and Commander Willem du Plesies, the Chief of Naval intelligence. Such meetings caused some embarrassment as they violated the ban on meetings with South African military personnel by state officials.

These meetings which were arranged by John Sears who was a registered agent for South Africa and Reagan's former campaign manager, demonstrated that a decision had been taken by the new administration to restore military intelligence links between the US and South Africa that were severed by the Carter administration.<sup>69</sup> But evidence has demonstrated through the events of January 1981 that military intelligence links had already been established.

On January 1981, South African commandos stormed an ANC house in a Maputo suburb, killing several members of the ANC. A few hours earlier, Haig declared that the "war against international terrorism" was a priority of the new administration's foreign policy.<sup>70</sup> The government of Samora Machel accused US intelligence of providing information to the South Africans on the details of their proposed target. Joaquim Chissano, the Mozambican Minister for Foreign Affairs referred to evidence linking the CIA to the raid.<sup>71</sup>

From such evidence it was learned that the CIA had been gathering information amongst others, in the area of ANC activity in Maputo. A month before the raid, the CIA sought and obtained information related to the location of the ANC houses. The Reagan

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<sup>69</sup> Bernard Magubane. "The United States of America and South Africa in the Reagan Era." Unpublished article, 1999.

<sup>70</sup> Gervasi and Wong, "Reagan Doctrine," p. 217.

<sup>71</sup> Memorandum from Joaquim Alberto Chissano, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maputo, 19/3/81, in ANC Archives, Mozambique Mission, Box file 12.

administration's response to this accusation from Mozambique was to stop food aid to the country at that catastrophic time of severe natural disasters.<sup>72</sup> Yet again, the strengthening of military intelligence links between the USA and SA became a key feature of the USA-SA relationship in the 1980s. Hence the report by the *New York Times*, on 23 July 1986, that the US and British intelligence had been exchanging information with their South African counterparts about the activities of the ANC over a period of time, appeared as no major revelation. According to the report, the exchange was "systematic and regular."<sup>73</sup> On the issue of the kind of information that was exchanged, it was disclosed that these included data such as "political activities, ANC bombing targets and the movement of leaders like Oliver Tambo, in return for South African data on Soviet and Cuban military and political involvement throughout Southern Africa."<sup>74</sup>

In September 1982, William Casey, Director of the CIA, met with military and government leaders in South Africa. The purpose of this meeting, it was learned, was to propose a US backed strategy to secure South Africa's borders. This issue was vital to South Africa's interests as she feared that if neighbouring states increased their support for the African National Congress, the country would be subjected to increasing sabotage and cross border raids.

Two months before Casey's visit, Randall Robinson again made available to the Press in Washington another leaked State department classified document which provided vital evidence of South Africa's intention to apply for a new loan from the International Monetary fund.<sup>75</sup> In view of the public disclosure, Secretary of State Alexander Haig advised South Africa on the adoption of a new strategy which would see her delaying her application until after the World Bank meetings took place in Washington in the fall. The scheduled meeting of the International Monetary fund was scheduled for Nov. 4, immediately

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<sup>72</sup> Chissano, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maputo, 19/3/81.

<sup>73</sup> *New York Times* (23 July 1986).

<sup>74</sup> *New York Times* (23 July 1986).

<sup>75</sup> Muntali Interview, 4 December 2002.

following after the World Bank meetings. With US support, Haig assured South Africa that the IMF would approve a loan in the amount of \$1.1 billion.<sup>76</sup>

Within a week of the intelligence group's visit to Washington, South African air-force jets destroyed a SWAPO base in Lubango, Angola which lay almost 200km north of the Angolan-Namibian border. This raid was South Africa's deepest invasion into Angola in six years. A month later, on April 30 1981, the Reagan state together with Britain and France vetoed four UN Resolutions calling for sanctions against Pretoria. Evidence of such support in the early period of Reagan's tenure, was enough to encourage brutality and oppression on the part of the apartheid state.

Support for the South Africa minority also implied the necessity of ensuring that the African National Congress remained isolated and impeded in its attempts to advance the struggle for freedom. I would contend that this need drove US involvement in the development of the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique and the Disengagement Agreement with Angola.<sup>77</sup> In fact the Reagan administration not only collaborated with the apartheid regime, but it also attempted to jeopardize the ANC image as the legitimate liberation organization of the freedom struggle. Justification for this strategy was provided by the US Deputy Ambassador to the UN, Mr. Liechtenstein, who pointed out that:

We do not perceive South Africa to constitute an external imperialistic threat to even its close neighbours. Destabilisation will remain in force until Angola and Mozambique do not permit their territory to be used by terrorists to attack South Africa. We do not regard the ANC as engaged in a legitimate quest for power. Nine out of ten deaths inflicted by ANC terrorist's action in South Africa are blacks. And the Pretoria government is certainly a more legitimate government than the Soviet government.<sup>78</sup>

Further evidence of US attempts to paralyse the activities of the ANC could be found even in statements coming directly from the White House. On 22 July 1986, the US President accused the ANC of "calculated terror" and expressed the view that the "South African

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<sup>76</sup> *Transafrica News Report*. (Winter 1980/1).

<sup>77</sup> Magubane. "USA and South Africa". 13.

<sup>78</sup> *Johannesburg Financial Mail* (25 November 1983).

government is under no obligation to negotiate the future of the country with any organization that proclaims a goal of creating a communist state and uses terrorist tactics to achieve it.”<sup>79</sup> I would again emphasise that events and the pressure exerted by civil society compelled the administration into a meeting with Tambo, a ‘terrorist’ no doubt.<sup>80</sup> But official views on terrorism and meetings with those considered to be hostile to the US and hence inappropriately labelled as ‘terrorists, continued to pervade successive US administrations to the present time. This was evident during the 2008 US Presidential primaries.<sup>81</sup>

Attempts to destroy the legitimacy of the ANC continued unabatedly during the first term of Reagan’s presidency. An example of such a strategy was the 1982 hearings organized by the sub-committee of the US Senate on Security and Terrorism. Under the Chairmanship of Jeremiah Denton, the mandate of the sub-committee was to investigate the role of the Soviet Union in “fermenting and supporting terrorism in Southern Africa.”<sup>82</sup> Through the testimony of ‘witnesses’, it sought to establish the extent through which the USSR had successfully penetrated and ‘taken over’ the ANC and SWAPO.<sup>83</sup> Essentially what the committee was expected to do was to justify the administration’s perception of the ANC being a ‘terrorist’ movement’ that was supported by the Soviet Union. Alfred Nzo, the Secretary-General of the ANC was bemused by the futility of this exercise, pointing out that the ANC and the Soviet Union made no secret of the fact that the latter as well as the Socialist community supported the ANC.<sup>84</sup> The appointment of the committee was therefore unnecessary.

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<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Magubane. “USA and South Africa.” 14. See also Jeffrey Herbst. “Incentives and Domestic Reform” on <http://wwics.si.edu/subsites/ccpdc/pubs/price/chap08.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> This is a reference to the Shultz/Tambo meeting in January 2007 and the Tambo/ Crocker meeting in London the year before.

<sup>81</sup> Republican Candidate John Mc Cain and incumbent President George W. Bush attempted to use Democratic hopeful Barack Obama’s statements on the possibility of meeting with leaders of hostile countries such as Iraq as an indication of his willingness to meet and negotiate terrorists or enemies of the US state. This occurred during the Presidential primaries in May 2008.

<sup>82</sup> Jeremiah Denton left America in the 60’s. “Believing” in the Vietnam War, he spent seven years and seven months as a POW after being shot down over North Vietnam and captured on 18 July 1965.

<sup>83</sup> The ANC considered these to be unreliable witnesses as they represented those segments of the movement who were former ANC students and MK cadres who had become ‘renegades’.

<sup>84</sup> Alfred Nzo, during discussions with activists in Oakland. Related by Counts. The work of this Sub-Committee was well documented in *Sechaba*, May 1982.

### ***Challenges for the Solidarity Groups and the ANC***

1984 was a particularly bleak year in all respects for the ANC and the Solidarity movement. Events on both sides of the Atlantic did not bode well for advancing the struggle locally as well as internationally. In that year Reagan won a second term of office through a landslide victory. This victory was a startling revelation that the American public accepted the status quo in relations to the US administration and its foreign policy direction. According to sources within the movement, who had direct links with those based in Lusaka at the time, the possibility of winning the support of the US state department and the American public seemed doomed.<sup>85</sup> Given the hostility that pervaded Washington, it was apparent that the ANC could not leverage any support nor shape the debates that took place over South Africa. They therefore appealed to the anti-apartheid lobby to take on that Herculean role of turning the tide of support in Washington. But even for the solidarity groups, this was a crippling time for their activities as evidenced by their failure to position the horrors of apartheid into the spotlight of the election arena. Cecelie Counts, recalled hearing from Black South Africans that “when Reagan was re-elected, whites were dancing in the streets” and reassuring themselves that “they were safe for another four years.”<sup>86</sup>

For any scholar studying this period, the writing was on the wall. The international tide was not turning against South Africa. For PW Botha, the events recounted earlier served to strengthen his notion that the position of South Africa was favoured. This was reinforced by developments arising out of his introduction a year before, of his new constitutional proposals or ‘moderate reforms’. These proposals, which made provision for a Tricameral Parliament with limited representation for South Africa’s Indian and Coloured population, excluded the country’s Black population from representation. On Wednesday, 2 November 1983, two million white voters, comprising about seventy five percent of all eligible white voters, went to the polls and through a referendum, granted Botha their approval for his new constitutional proposals. Reaction from those allied to the apartheid state was not unusual. The US State Department welcomed the results of the referendum as did a large segment of the South African and American business community. For a euphoric PW Botha,

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<sup>85</sup> Conversations with struggle veteran Phyllis Naidoo in Durban, April 2000; Dr. Lucky Mabasa, student activist in the 1970’s and later General Manager of the ANC, Luthuli House, October 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Counts Interview, 30 November 2002.

the results vindicated him and strengthened his resolved “to go ahead with proper and evolutionary reform” without bringing Blacks into the central government in any meaningful way.

Reactions from opposition groups within South Africa were predictable. The United Democratic Front (UDF) dismissed the results of the referendum held for the purposes of setting up what it considered to be “a bogus parliament.”<sup>87</sup> The activities of this movement, which was launched as a national organization at a rally of seven thousand people in Cape Town on 20 August 1983, would eventually prove crucial to the solidarity groups in the USA, the ANC and to the despondent South African majority. Writing on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organisation’s birth, Frank Chikane, former General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, explained that the UDF represented but one pillar of a four pronged strategy to bring the apartheid regime to its knees.<sup>88</sup> The implementation of Botha’s new constitution in 1984 resulted in organizations such as the UDF moving beyond strategies of protest to those aimed at causing situations of “ungovernability.”<sup>89</sup> As such notions of mass resistance took root in South Africa, evidence suggests that the apartheid state apparatus not only rapidly lost control of the situations in the Black townships but it found itself unable to monitor the activities of the UDF.<sup>90</sup>

On September 3, a few months after the launch of the UDF and just before Reagan’s re-election, Prime Minister PW Botha implemented his set of moderate reforms. This resulted in protest action in Black townships throughout the country.<sup>91</sup> Within a few weeks, Botha

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<sup>87</sup> Massie. *Loosing the Bonds*. 552.

<sup>88</sup> *The Natal Mercury* (20 August 2003). Frank Chikane. Armed struggle, sanctions and the mobilization of the international community against apartheid and the development of the internal political underground were representative of the other three pillars of the new strategy. The genesis of the UDF was a call by the ANC in exile for all South Africans to form a united front to resist the regime which was becoming more repressive and brutal in the run-up to the implementation of the new ‘bogus’ Tricameral Parliament under a new South African constitution.

<sup>89</sup> , *The Natal Mercury* (20 August 2003).

<sup>90</sup> Jeremy Seekings. *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* (Cape Town. David Philip, 2000). 23.

<sup>91</sup> The Vaal townships, in the south of Johannesburg, broke out in fierce protest action on 3 September 1984. This was the day that Botha’s new Constitution came into being. Mass uprisings, including trade union strikes spread rapidly throughout South Africa. State reaction to such unprecedented action, was ruthless, with the loss of 500 lives being recorded. See Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson. *All Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980’s* (New York. Ford Foundation and Foreign Policy Association, 1991).

ordered the arrest of the country's Black trade union leadership. These events were not lost to the international community who were taken by surprise. In the UN, the General Assembly voted on a nonbinding resolution that condemned the arrests. The resolution was passed with an overwhelming majority, but the United States of America had abstained.

Given the brutality of the South African state and the increasing numbers of deaths, torture, detention and harassment of activists in the country, it was considered unacceptable by many that the US should abstain. In trying to explore the mood of the time, I have found that the US abstention proved crucial to the work of the Washington network. It was a critical time that marked a turning point in the history of the movement's work. For Randall Robinson, as with many other US activists, this was the last straw. Such action was considered a blatant betrayal by their country which was described as a "two-faced democracy" and a "peacock that would not see itself."<sup>92</sup> Barely two months before this, Thabo Mbeki had visited the US. During his stay in there, he met with Robinson and addressed groups such as Transafrica imploring them to make "American officials listen" to the voices of South Africa's oppressed.<sup>93</sup> Yet the existence of a toxic cocktail of apartheid brutality and US support created much embarrassment and disappointment for these activists who recognized their failure to respond to Mbeki's appeal. After many discussions and meetings of the group, they reached an agreement on the need for an aggressive course of action. It was at this point that Robinson and his colleagues at Transafrica hatched the plan to enter the embassy in Washington and to stage a sit in as a strategy aimed at drawing the attention of the US public and State Department to the real plight of South Africa's oppressed.

For many activists such as Cecelie Counts, this situation together with the television images of police brutality being beamed from South Africa on local TV stations, made them realize "that they had to do something different."<sup>94</sup> Hence Robinson was able to draw support from such quarters. Relying on the support network in Washington, Counts succeeded in lobbying support from the Churches, student groups and community organizations-all of

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<sup>92</sup> Robinson. *Defending the Spirit*, 147.

<sup>93</sup> Robinson. *Defending the Spirit*, 147.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Counts, 30 November 2002. After the formation of the Free South Africa Movement, Counts took on the position of coordinator of demonstrations for the movement.

whom stood by to lend their support to Robinson and his group as they left the embassy under escort by six uniformed US Secret Service Officers for their journey to prison. It was this group again that was there to welcome them upon their release from prison on Thanksgiving morning. The next day marked the birth of the *Free South Africa* movement.

The formation of this movement proved to be an effective strategy to alert the Washington community as well as others to the plight of South Africa's disenfranchised majority. Counts recalled the daily demonstrations that were held for almost a year outside the South African embassy, with arrests taking place every weekend. She also provided a vivid account of the commitment of demonstrators to the South African cause, by explaining how, on some days, Massachusetts Avenue would be lined with up to five thousand demonstrators, in spite of the cold and snow.

Randall Robinson's recollection of those that came to Washington to participate in demonstrations is evidence not only of the commitment alluded to by Counts, but also the growing strength of the solidarity network. Gay MacDougall of the Lawyers for Civil Rights, brought thousands of lawyers to demonstrate; John Jacob brought the Urban National League; a clergyman drove a bus load of supporters from the mid-west; Mayors like Coleman Young from Detroit were arrested; Coretta Scott King was taken away with her children; Rory Kennedy and her brother Douglas were arrested; Senator Edward Kennedy came to address the crowds; every member of the Congressional Black Caucus, except two, were arrested; Stevie Wonder was handcuffed at the embassy; Jesse Jackson was arrested; Lowell Weicker, a Republican from Connecticut became the first and only US Senator ever arrested in an act of Civil Disobedience.<sup>95</sup>

While the list of those arrested reads like the 'Who's Who' of the celebrity group of society, the majority of those who participated in these demonstrations as well as those that took place throughout the country were purely volunteers, people who "cared a lot but had been involved in their own work as well."<sup>96</sup> Much their time was made available in the evenings or

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<sup>95</sup> Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 156; *Transafrica Issue Brief*, FSAM.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Counts.

on weekends. But the involvement of ‘celebrity’ activists was effective in drawing the attention of the American media to the work of the anti-apartheid group. Muzwai Muntali’s description of the American media carried a tone of sharp cynicism, referring to them as being “fickle and crisis driven.” But as I later learned, such cynicism was not unjustified. Drawing the interest of the media required creativity and effort on the part of the movement. If that meant glamorizing the work of the movement, it had to be done. To hold their interest, demonstrations had to comprise of large gatherings of activists involved in ‘innovative activity.’<sup>97</sup>

One example of such ‘innovative activity’ took place in August 1985, just after South Africa imposed a state of emergency and banned public funerals. Paul Newman, Jesse Jackson, major civil rights and labour leaders joined 10 000 people in a ‘funeral march’ to the State Department to protest the Reagan administration’s policy of “constructive engagement.” They carried black cardboard coffins in memory of those killed in South Africa in the previous eleven months of unrest.<sup>98</sup> Muntali recalled the situation where US activists began building and spray painting coffins in their home—much to the horror of their neighbours—for a mock funeral to draw attention in the US to this form of police brutality. This march was a successful ‘gimmick’ which kept the press and television enthralled and eager to capture this event.

### ***How the US Media saw US Anti-Apartheid Activism***

An interesting assessment of the USA mainstream media to all of this was provided by a fellow journalist, Roger Wilkins in an interview which he gave to *Transafrica* in 1985. This interview was useful in understanding the dynamics that pervaded the media sector at the time. According to Wilkins, since the implementation of Botha’s new constitutional dispensation, mainstream American press coverage of South Africa “has been steady.”<sup>99</sup> But he conveyed his dissatisfaction with the quality of the media coverage especially during the 1984-1985 years. Using the birth of the FSAM as an example, he pointed out that that event

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with Muntali.

<sup>98</sup> *New York Times* (13 August 1985).

<sup>99</sup> *Transafrica Forum Issue Brief*, June-July 1985.

was the “most important initiative undertaken by black private citizens since Martin Luther King died and the most successful.”

Yet the media did not perceive it in that light. He drew attention to coverage provided by columnists such as Joseph Kraft and Richard Cohen who wrote “that [the FSAM] was “just a bunch of civil rights people who should stick to [protesting] budget cuts in domestic programmes.”<sup>100</sup> But when the movement’s influence succeeded in pervading 28 cities, articles in major magazines like *Newsweek* and *People* conveyed a perception of a spontaneous movement that “sprang full grown from the consciousness of white America” when in fact “black Americans created it, started it and kept it alive.” For him it was easy for editors to initially dismiss South Africa issue because it involved the oppression of people “who are not like you and who do not look like you.”<sup>101</sup>

### ***US Activism Spreads***

While the anti-apartheid movement spread throughout the country with demonstrations taking place in California, New York, Boston, Houston, Chicago and Pittsburgh, for activists in South Africa all of this activity taking place across the Atlantic appeared to be glamorous and exciting.<sup>102</sup> This was not so. While there may have been many high moments, activists also referred to the many low moments. Counts, who was at the embassy every day, explained the lows when the turnout on the coldest days would “shrink beyond our ability to form a small circle of pickets” and that by month nine, symptoms of ‘picketitis’ set in.<sup>103</sup>

In the meanwhile, another related movement-the Divestment Movement- began to grow at a rapid rate in response to developments in South Africa as well as in response to pressure from local anti-apartheid groups. In the state of Connecticut, several divestment protests occurred at university campuses which in turn led to the formation of the Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee (CAAC). Comprising a core group of about 6-10 people who worked

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<sup>100</sup> *Transafrica Forum Issue Brief*, June-July 1985.

<sup>101</sup> *Transafrica Forum Issue Brief*, June-July 1985.

<sup>102</sup> Activity in these cities and states are not examined in this chapter.

<sup>103</sup> This was a term used by activists to describe a ‘disease’ which caused one to walk in circles even when not on demonstration or protest.

from their homes on a very low budget, the CAAC group worked for almost two years to educate people of the state about the evils of apartheid and to build a state-wide network. This was done through the distribution of printed material, speaking opportunities, newspaper articles and conferences and social events. For example, in June 1980, the CAAC held a dinner for about 200 people to mark the fourth anniversary of the Soweto uprising. Dumisani Khumalo, a South African who worked for the American Committee on Africa was invited to address guests. Khumalo used this opportunity to urge guests to pressurize American companies to divest from South Africa.<sup>104</sup>

A simultaneous development was the introduction in 1981 of two bills by anti-apartheid legislators in the state legislature calling for the sale of all state investments in corporations or banks conducting business with the apartheid institutions in South Africa. The CAAC played a critical role in this initiative by organizing a lobbying campaign which saw leaders of community groups, labour unions, religious groups and black organisations being brought to the state capitol. In spite of shock expressed by the business community, the bill passed through both houses with more than the two thirds majority. For the CAAC this was a victory, but it was to be a short lived one as only two weeks later the Divestment Bill suffered a veto by Governor O' Neill.<sup>105</sup> A year later, on June 9 1982, an amended version of the bill passed again through both houses and was finally signed into law by O'Neill. But the passing of this bill into law would not have been possible without the work of the CAAC which was galvanized into action by the 1981 veto.<sup>106</sup> The Divestment issue in Connecticut and the work of the CAAC drew the attention of state representatives in other parts of the country. With the result, by the end of 1982, cities such as Philadelphia, Wilmington and Grand Rapids and states such as Connecticut, Massachusetts and Michigan had approved the divestment of \$250 million in public money.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 531.

<sup>105</sup> This was done in response to pressure from the business community that the bill was too vague and could adversely affect business in Connecticut.

<sup>106</sup> Such action included soliciting the support of organizations such as Jesse Jackson's OPERATION PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) and Hartford's Black Ministerial Alliance. Operation Push was formed by Jesse Jackson in 1971 and focused on social justice and civil rights issues for African-Americans. See *Time Magazine* (3 January 1972).

<sup>107</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 535.

### ***The Work of the ACOA***

While much of this chapter focuses on the Washington based lobby groups, the work of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), the oldest anti-apartheid organization in the United States, also merits scrutiny for it contributed greatly to the developments in Washington and the rest of the country, in driving action against South Africa. In 1981, Jennifer Davis succeeded George Houser as executive Director of ACOA. In that year, Davis together with Dumisani Khumalo and other activists spent much of that year organizing the public investment conference, which was funded by various churches and individuals. The conference was attended by nearly 200 union leaders, anti-apartheid activists, city officials, financial experts and state legislators on June 12, 1981.<sup>108</sup> In a speech at the Church Centre, Julian Bond from Georgia levelled criticism at the Reagan administration and appealed to the conference participants to “end American investment in evil.”<sup>109</sup> This speech, together with workshops which were held on the following day and the final plenary session which was critical in eliciting the commitment of participants to act, proved effective. According to Davis and other activists like Richard Knight, the legislators were so “fired up” by the conference resolutions and discussions that when they returned home, every one filed a divestment bill.<sup>110</sup>

The work of the ACOA continued on the East Coast of the USA and was evident in their work in the formation of MassDivest, an anti-apartheid coalition which comprised organizations such as the Black Ecumenical Council, the Catholic archdiocese of Boston, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the local chapter of TransAfrica, the American Federation of State County and Municipal employees and other sympathetic groups and which was devoted to seeking a policy of total divestment.<sup>111</sup> Employing the same strategies as their colleagues in Connecticut, and applying the necessary pressure on State House through Representative Mel King of Boston and Jack

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with Jennifer Davis, 9 December 2002, New York City. Folder 4.

<sup>109</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*. 481.

<sup>110</sup> Interviews with Jennifer Davis, 9 December 2002, Richard Knight, 11 December 2002, New York City, Frank Ferrari, 11 December 2002, New York City.

<sup>111</sup> This policy entailed the selling of all stocks and bonds from every company and bank conducting business in South Africa.

Backman, a white liberal senator, Mass Divest was successful in ensuring that the full divestment bill affecting \$91 million in state investments, became law in January 1983.<sup>112</sup>

With the support of the new Governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis, the law was rapidly implemented and within nine months. Massie pointed out that \$68 million dollars in investments in companies doing business in South Africa had been sold off.

Events in Boston had been so heartening for Davis and the ACOA that they decided to hold the second national conference on Public Investment and South Africa in that city. The conference took place in April 1983 and brought together the same constituency that was present at the first conference. Seizing the opportunities created by the mood of this conference Davis and Khumalo and other staff members of ACOA, criss-crossed the United States to spread the work about divestment. For example in 1983, Khumalo travelled to the three states of Nebraska, Rhode Island and Nevada while Davis addressed the National Association of State Treasurers and Gail Hovey testified before the Illinois House of Representatives.<sup>113</sup> They also initiated a newsletter called *Public Investment and South Africa*.<sup>114</sup>

Using the euphoric mood that seemed to pervade efforts to heighten awareness of the South African situation, ACOA focused on corporate ethics and constructive engagement. Writing for the *Washington Post* on 21 May 1983, Davis pointed out:

Whatever the original intention of Leon Sullivan, the author of the principles, the principles have been an extremely useful tool for the South African government and the corporations...Instead of discussing the role that the corporations play in supplying the government with vital products and technology, the debate focuses on the working

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<sup>112</sup> Mel King was a leading Black politician and a member of the Black caucus. This bill was originally vetoed by Governor Edward King, a conservative, in 1982, which toned down the main provisions of the bill. King and Buckman refused to accept the amended version of the bill and forced through 'a stunning override' of the bill in both houses which was opposed by the Governor. But in spite of this opposition, it became law.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Davis, 9 December 2002.

<sup>114</sup> According to Massie, this newsletter was effective because it reached more than 600 legislators and divestment activists.

conditions...of workers who represent fewer than one percent of the black labour force...what the state fears is not a code of conduct that makes it easier for foreign corporations to stay , but pressure on them to pull out.<sup>115</sup>

### ***The Realisation of Goals***

The activities of the Free South Africa Movement and the other anti-apartheid lobby groups heightened awareness in the United States of the plight of South African Blacks with the result that the apartheid became a broad based concern in the US. According to the Washington-based Investor Responsibility Research Centre, five American Companies, including General Electric and the VF Corporation, which made Lee blue jeans, pulled out of South Africa since January 1986. In 1985, thirty eight American Companies stopped doing business with South Africa. In 1984, only six stopped doing business. A spokesman for the centre said 267 were continuing with their South African operations. AT the end of 1984, American companies had \$1.8 billion tied up in South African interests, but by, 1985, he added, the figure had dropped considerably. But for Catherine Hargrove, a Free South Africa campaigner, “corporate campaigns were not traditionally short...people understand what kind of struggle it’s going to be...we’re prepared to go the distance with it.”<sup>116</sup>

### ***The ANC and US Solidarity: The Relationship Grows***

The ANC has often taken the credit for winning the battle on the international battleground and in so doing, continued to play down the role of the anti-apartheid groups. But evidence has yielding the following finding-that the anti-apartheid lobby created the right climate for the ANC in the US especially in Washington. By doing this, they succeeded in driving a wedge between the apartheid state and the State Department. This was clear from the preceding discussion which demonstrated the effectiveness of this group in raising awareness in the US of the ANC’s plight and of clearing the way for the organisation’s recognition as a legitimate liberation movement. This was done by facilitating more contact between ANC leaders and officials in Washington and corporate representatives.

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<sup>115</sup> *The Washington Post* (21 May 1983).

<sup>116</sup> *The New York Times* (10 May 1986). *Transafrica* Press Cutting Collection.

It also needs to be emphasized that in spite of the anti-west rhetoric, the ANC realized the importance of winning over official support from Washington and of using civil society to reach the US state authorities. Just after Reagan's election, Secretary-General Alfred Nzo visited the USA in November of 1980. Addressing a banquet in Oakland he appealed for the support of "progressive forces" in the US by persuading those present that this was critical for the process of applying "concerted pressure" for the imposition of mandatory economic sanctions" on the apartheid regime.<sup>117</sup>

As a result, the 1980s were characterised by more frequent visits of ANC leaders. In view of changing attitudes people were willing to meet with leaders such as Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki who made visits to between 1980 and 1987. But this was not the case with the State Department and the White House-until September 1986 when Crocker met with Tambo in London. At the invitation of Transafrica and the Southern Africa Support group, Tambo visited the US in June 1981 to attend a conference of Black leaders in Washington, convened as a response to Reagan's policies on Southern Africa.<sup>118</sup> While in Washington, Transafrica arranged for Tambo to hold separate meetings with representatives of Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate Sub-committees on Africa. A meeting was also held with *The Washington Post* at its editorial offices.<sup>119</sup>

Activists such as Cecelie Counts, Muzwai Munthali and William Minter recalled meeting with Tambo where issues such as the strengthening of links between the liberation organizations and the Solidarity movements was discussed. After the Washington meetings, Tambo, accompanied by Randall Robinson, travelled to Atlanta for meetings with Mayor Lowery, Senator Julian Bond, Coretta Scott King and Andrew Young. The visit was concluded with an address delivered to a session of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid, which was chaired by Ambassador Akpokorode Clark, the Nigerian Ambassador to the UN and the Chair of the Special Committee. After his visits, Tambo agreed on the effectiveness and strength of "our firm and dedicated allies in the United States" and on the need to maintain

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<sup>117</sup> Alfred Nzo. "The New Offensive against Apartheid," in *World Magazine* (13 December 1980). 3.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Muntali.

<sup>119</sup> This visit was well documented by *Sechaba* in its July 1981 issue.

the “consistent fights on both sides” to guarantee that plots hatched by Pretoria can be defeated.<sup>120</sup>

In October of the same year a conference was held by the Churches in New York City in co-sponsorship with the ANC and SWAPO to assess the impact of the links between the SA state and the US government.. Alfred Nzo led the ANC delegation to the conference. An important aspect of the Conference was the crafting of the historic New York declaration which stated that:

We have a special responsibility to play...it is our government that keeps apartheid alive, feeds it, oils it and arms it. The heroics people of the ANC and SWAPO are destroying apartheid from within, but we can end our government’s pact with racism, which if not obliterated, will destroy us all. This conference proudly takes up this fight and joins the peoples of the world.<sup>121</sup>

In 1983 Tambo again visited the US as a guest of Transafrica. For activists, the visits by ANC leaders was considered an effective strategy in drawing the interest of American civil society which was image driven. Hence calls such as “Oliver Tambo is coming. Come and see a real liberation leader” provided the crowds needed to fill the halls. Tambo remained the favourite of the US public, but as argued earlier on, he was still not the favourite of the State Department, which preferred contact with the UDF and COSATU. The reason for this was driven by their understanding that these organizations were moderate and less militant than the ANC. They failed to realise that the UDF was formed in response to the ANC’s call and that there was a strong bond between these two organisations, which had to be denied, for obvious reasons, at the time.

Of the many visits undertaken by the ANC leadership to the USA, perhaps the most significant one was that undertaken by Tambo in 1987 in response to the first invitation from the White House to meet, not with Reagan but with Secretary of State George

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<sup>120</sup> Sechaba. July 1981.

<sup>121</sup> Sechaba. January 1982.

Shultz.<sup>122</sup> This meeting has been extensively analysed in my previous chapter, but I would still add that it was unrivalled in significance.

During a press conference held at the conclusion of the Kabwe Conference in June 1985, the ANC claimed that the process of isolating South Africa was rapidly gaining pace. It was even closer than ever before to fulfilling its main foreign policy objectives to mobilize the support of the international community for South Africa's isolation and to gain international recognition as the only legitimate representative of the country's oppressed. This was reiterated at the ANC's International Conference held in Arusha, Tanzania in December 1987.<sup>123</sup> In fact by 1986, with the passing of the CAAA and with increased official state contacts being made between the ANC and the US government, I would contend that the situation was already in place, with the battle for the American turf already secured by the ANC. But at the same time, I would reiterate my view that this was not possible without the work undertaken by the solidarity groups in the US who succeeded, through their activities and strategies in moving the ANC from the fringe of American politics to the mainstream. I have demonstrated through data presented that on its own, the ANC was unable to shape the political debates in Washington. This was a common view shared by all activists interviewed for the purposes of this study. Many went further to claim that the ANC had no voice in Washington and that Transafrica was the voice of the ANC. It was also their view that the ANC would not have been able to push through the CAAA without its collaboration with the solidarity groups.

These views conveyed a certain degree of dissatisfaction with attempts by the ANC to downplay the role the anti-apartheid groups in the freedom struggle and certainly resulted in the tension which seems to characterize the relationship between these two movements in a post apartheid environment. A further contribution to this tension has been the criticism

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<sup>122</sup> There are virtually no details available of what transpired at the meeting or of the logistical arrangements for this meeting. But it has been confirmed by many sources that Chester Crocker was present.

<sup>123</sup> See Documents of the ANC conference, "Peoples of the World United against Apartheid for a Democratic South Africa," 1-4 December 1987. Hosted by Tanzania, this was the ANC's first International conference and attracted over 500 delegates from all continents. This conference was also part of ANC's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The aim of the conference was to bring together supporters of the ANC to collectively develop an international strategy for pushing the agenda for change inside South Africa and to map thoughts for a post apartheid society.

levelled by activists on the political direction pursued by a post apartheid ANC government especially in areas of delivery of basic services, HIV Aids and Zimbabwe. This was evidenced by views shared at the AAM Conference at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2004 and the ANC's reaction to the convening of this meeting.

As Chair of the Conference as a member of the ANC, I was subjected to intense pressure from Senior ANC Officials to cancel the conference. Although authority to host and participate in such a conference was furnished by the Secretary-General of the Party a year prior to the conference being held, two months before the conference was due to be held immense pressure was applied to stop the conference. As this was an academic endeavour under the auspices of a University, the Conference Committee refused to relent under pressure from the ANC. They took a collective decision to proceed with the conference as scheduled. The ruling party's response to this was to prevent participation by leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, with the result that the only senior level participation came from Ministers Kader Asmal, Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad and Mr. Ebrahim Ebrahim (representing the Presidency). South Africa and particularly the ANC's opportunity to personally thank the International Solidarity Movement during their presence here in the country was lost and served to justify views previously communicated by these activists.<sup>124</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

While my chapter may have provided the solidarity groups with a rather high profile in the struggle history, I would argue that given the work of the movement and its successes in pushing the South African agenda to the forefront of US politics, this was unavoidable. Also any attempt to understand the liberation struggle during this period must take into account the limitations and difficulties of the movement during this period, which have been alluded to in previous chapters of my work. It would be appropriate to therefore conclude this chapter with the regular plea which Walter Sisulu made to USA activists during the struggle years-- *Ningadinwe Nangomso*. Translated it means, *Please do not tire of supporting us, even tomorrow*.

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<sup>124</sup> See also media reports on the conference in *The Daily News* (12 October 2004); *The Natal Witness* (21 October 2004); *Pretoria News* (13 October 2004).

This plea was well heeded and contributed in a phenomenal manner to the freedom we South Africans enjoy today.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Sunday Times* (11 May 2003). “Sisulu’s Heroic Struggles will be warmly remembered, even in the USA.”

## *Conclusion*

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The African National Congress of South Africa has remained faithful to the cause of freedom. It leads the national struggle for all oppressed and exploited black people. It stands for a new order in South Africa where racism shall be a thing of the past and human dignity and equality shall prevail in the life of our country. But before that new order shall be born, many lives will be lost. We are ready to meet the challenge...<sup>1</sup>

Indeed they were ready. Having analysed the dynamics which characterised the attempts of the African National Congress to forge a relationship with the United States of America, my thesis has shown that the ANC's success in this area and others was derived from this commitment to always "meet the challenges." The view that it may not always have done so adequately is not a fair assessment given my argument that the ANC was working on a blank canvas, in a hostile domestic environment and in a global vacuum. This view makes my findings all the more satisfying.

Looking at the history of the movement from 1945-1987 has allowed me to conclude that a relationship with the world's most powerful player enabled certain types of developments at particular points, making the ANC's continued existence a certainty. Moving its struggle to the international battleground signified a strategic intervention on the part of the ANC to ensure its survival. But this history has been characterised by prioritisations, reassessments and repositioning, indicating that South Africa's liberation protagonist would not allow itself to be undermined. From the crafting of documents and memoranda such as *Our Foreign Policy Objectives, Strategy and Tactics* and the *Thabo Mbeki Memorandum*, the ANC demonstrated that it was determined to navigate the numerous challenges in its path in a bid to secure the freedom of South Africa's oppressed majority.

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver Tambo. Speech at the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African National Congress. Unity in Action: A Short History of the ANC(South Africa) 1912-1982 (London, African National Congress). 71.

Starting out as an unknown and unrecognised entity within the US State structures, the African National Congress was strained to the limits as it confronted the narrow and obdurate stance of US administrations from John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan. These administrations positioned their international policies including their Africa policies, within the context of international global developments such as the Cold War. It was this factor, together with strategic and economic considerations that drove the USA's decision to close ranks with the apartheid state against the ANC, hence refusing to accord the ANC any recognition until the latter half of the 1980s. Documents such as the *National Study Security Memorandum 39(NSSM 39)*, and the role of individuals such as Henry Kissinger complicated the ANC's attempts to swing US State support for its cause.

Further complexities in the ANC's attempts to successfully position itself within the US state were presented by the challenges experienced on the African continent. These included the ANC's failure to influence African diplomacy or to even secure the support of the continent's most influential body, the *Organisation of African Unity*. The production of strategy documents such as the *Lusaka Manifesto on Southern Africa* and *African Strategy on Southern Africa* clearly demonstrated that the major players on the continent treated the ANC with indifference. The conclusion of agreements such as the *Nkomati Accord* meant that the ANC's efforts to win over the African players would not see any encouraging results until the adoption of the Harare Declaration in August 1989.

This thesis has been concerned with showing that the entire period under analysis was one of protracted struggle for the ANC. But the 1980s were the toughest years. These years have particular resonance for me as they represented my time in the USA from where I observed events in South Africa. Given the fact that political oppression had reached unprecedented levels in my country and that many of my *comrades* were disappearing, suffering arrest, torture, detention or seeking refuge in exile. Like others who had left loved ones behind, I retreated into a shell of despair. As I have argued in Chapter Four, even *perestroika* had dashed our hopes as we saw long and loyal friends like the Soviet Union, begin to cut ties with our movement.

But unbeknown to us, for the USA, by the late 1980s, the writing was on the wall. Apartheid had to be dismantled. Events unfolding in South Africa, the efforts of the US

and international anti-apartheid solidarity groups and international condemnation of the apartheid state, created intense pressure on Washington to reposition its South Africa policy. The US State clearly did not want to be seen, through its actions, as trailing behind or sitting on the sidelines. As was the usual strategy in relation to its international policies, the USA did not merely want a slice of the action, it wanted to be the main actor leading the process. From the moment of the passing of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, the process commenced and continued with a series of diplomatic manoeuvres such as the formation of the Corporate Council, the implementation of Educational linkages and creation of educational opportunities and the convening of official meetings with the ANC. But it was the *Shultz Commission Report* of 1986 that acted as the saving grace for the ANC in the USA. By declaring Constructive Engagement a failure, this document sounded the death knell of Reagan's infamous policy and in so doing, stood in stark comparison to other documents such as NSSM 39. A meeting between George Shultz and Oliver Tambo in January 1987 was followed in June 1989 by a series of other high level meetings undertaken by Reagan's successor George Bush with South African activists.

In May 1989, George Bush Senior met with Desmond Tutu who led a delegation of South African clerics to Washington.<sup>2</sup> The significance of my conclusion that Washington wanted to play a leading role in the dismantling of apartheid was well captured here by Tutu's recollection of the meeting. In a post meeting briefing, he pointed out that Bush explained that "he did not want to give the impression of benign indifference...that he wanted to be a catalyst for change..." Bush's view encapsulates US strategy of playing a leading role in global developments. But more significantly, as Bush was determined to be seen as pushing serious change in policy, he issued an invitation to Albertina Sisulu to a meeting with him at the White House.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This meeting was the culmination of a high level meeting that took place in Washington. The latter, was arranged by Transafrica and included clerics from South Africa, US government officials, captains of US corporations and leaders of civic organisations. Describing these meetings Muntali of *Transafrica* explained that at that time while the Tutu/Bush meeting did not accomplish much, the meeting of different stakeholders was in itself an achievement because it was able to bring so many stakeholders together-all with a common interest in South Africa-to meet with the South Africans. Muntali Interview. (4 December 2002).

<sup>3</sup> *Washington Post* (19 May 1981). Albertina Sisulu was a prominent and respected activist. She was the wife of Walter Sisulu who was incarcerated at this time in a South African jail. She was also the co-Chair of the United Democratic Front.

Such impressive and positive developments allowed me to conclude that considerable credit should be apportioned to US civil society. Through their solidarity work, organisations such as the *American Committee on Africa*, *Free South Africa Movement*, *Transafrica* and the thousands of individuals in the USA succeeded in creating an awareness of the plight of South Africa's oppressed majority, alerting the people of the USA and the US media to the many clandestine operations and liaisons that existed between Washington and Pretoria. As a result they positioned their work to apply relentless pressure on the US State to change policy and to move support away from the apartheid apparatus to the ANC. Without the work of these groups, the ANC's work of gaining recognition from the US authorities would have been extremely burdensome. These collective efforts contributed to the ANC's attempts in successfully winning the international battleground. That they were a people denied no longer was obvious. For the African National Congress of South Africa, Africa's oldest liberation movement had won the soul of the USA.

Recent studies by scholars such as Raymond Suttner have sought to concentrate on the value of the domestic scene in furthering the goals of the movement, thus challenging positions I have taken in this study on the importance of the foreign domain for the struggle.<sup>4</sup> But I would take issue with his views by concluding that regardless of the nature of Oliver Tambo's defects, he understood fully that his movement could not operate in isolation to the international scene. The struggle and the ANC had to be interconnected with global developments. Positioning themselves globally made the maximisation of their revolution in that terrain, a certainty.

While I respect the approach of scholars such as Suttner or other internationally based scholars who support similar views, my approach does not deny the power of youth or other clandestine domestic South African networks in the freedom struggle. But the Suttner theory can perhaps be considered parochial especially since the struggle is contextualised as one against colonial rule. This begs comparison with the Barack

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<sup>4</sup> Raymond Suttner is an academic and former ANC activist. Drawing on extensive oral testimonies of underground activists, he convincingly argued that such activists who were based within South Africa were successful in rebuilding domestic networks after the ANC was banned. Suttner pointed out that the focus on the role of the underground segment within South Africa has been neglected. Given this shortcoming in the historiography of the struggle, he sought a redress in this study. See Raymond Suttner. *The ANC Underground in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2008).

Obama era that is characterised by a compelling anti-imperialist global vision, which is refreshing. Barack Obama was not a child of the civil rights era. Coming from a swirling set of identities, Obama's political consciousness emerged during the era of South African consciousness. Like Martin Luther King Jr., his understanding of the significance of internationalism took root during these formative years. Hence his understanding of his African identity would perhaps make him the first global leader to acknowledge this. This consciousness was evident when he became involved as an undergraduate student at Berkeley University with the divestment campaign. While he acknowledged that his involvement began "as something of a lark....part of the radical pose my friends and I sought to maintain" it eventually grew into a larger role where people "began to listen to my opinion." This he pointed out was a "discovery". Addressing students at a rally planned to coincide with the trustees meeting at Berkeley, he expounded the importance of supporting global struggles as follows:

I say there is a struggle going on....Its happening an ocean away. But it's a struggle that touches each and every one of us. Whether we know it or not. Whether we want it or not. A struggle that demands we choose sides. Not between black and white. Not between rich and poor.... Its a choice between dignity and servitude ....A choice between right and wrong.<sup>5</sup>

This address serves to strengthen my contention of his political consciousness which was driven by a recognition of the value of internationalism. My purpose in alluding to Obama and his era in this concluding segment of my dissertation is derived from an intention to contribute towards the production of a perspective that creates a balance between the views of Raymond Suttner who presents a strong case for the importance of the domestic networks and my study which sought to highlight the value of global interconnectedness and internationalism for the freedom struggle.<sup>6</sup>

Concluding this thesis in another time creates an enigma for me especially as I think about the Conference on *The Future of the Past*. Five to ten years ago I could not have written much of what I have done over the last few years as I was in a different space.

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<sup>5</sup> Barack Hussein Obama is currently the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the USA and the first African-American to hold such office in that country. See Barack Obama. *Dreams from my Father. A Story of Race and Inheritance* (Edinburgh. Canongate, 2004). 105, 106.

<sup>6</sup> The reader needs to be reminded of the views of Michael Sachs, an ANC, NEC member who in July 2007 wrote about the pitfalls of divorcing domestic political developments from global developments. In regard to political consciousness derived from the King emphasis on the need to cast global visions across the oceans. This was discussed at some length in Chapter One.

The dilemmas I have experienced and continue to experience find comparison with academics who at the conference alluded to their predicament at producing history in a post apartheid South Africa. Cohen's reference to the complexities created by "time and temporalities," continues to create turmoil for me. While I began my study in a post-apartheid period, I am now concluding this thesis at a contentious time in South Africa's history as its citizens have just witnessed the turbulent exit from office of President Thabo Mbeki-the son of an icon of struggle and a contemporary of Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki. I will revisit this issue before concluding this final stage of my review.

While I started out to write about the ANC at a time when the work of the movement was hardly documented, in the last five years the documentary trail has increased by leaps and bounds with the result that I can now acknowledge that the world has moved. With the burst of scholarship over the last five years on South Africa and its freedom struggle, we can rest assured that our democracy has moved in the eyes of scholars in this country and globally. The catalyst for such historical scholarship has been the increased availability of research data. In South Africa, they include archival collections of the ANC, PAC, Black Consciousness Movement, United Democratic Front and Trade Unions; personal papers of freedom fighters and struggle icons such as Nelson Mandela, Kader Asmal, Frene Ginwala, Oliver Tambo, Ahmed Kathrada, Mac Maharaj, Phyllis Naidoo, Lionel Forman; apartheid state records such as those of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Safety and Security and the South African Defense Force; rare journals of liberation and resistance organisations and various oral histories. In the USA archival material from the Department of State, including those released through the different Presidential Executive Orders; Presidential Papers; papers of solidarity organisations such as *Transafrica* and *The American Committee on Africa*, *The Liberation Committee*, *The Washington Office on Africa* and *The Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights*; material obtained by the National Security Archive at George Washington University through FOIA(Freedom of Information Act) and finally the personal papers of US activists such as Enuga Reddy, Jennifer Davis, George Houser and Randall Robinson are accessible.

I refer to the above because it begs comparison with the challenges I experienced in respect of access to data at the time I commenced this study. Further, given the availability of sources relating to the ANC today, I would expect that the parameters of my modest study will be pushed further by scholars in the future. That the future will be

characterised by a dynamic flow of further historical scholarship is undeniable, but what is perhaps more notable is that the past will inevitably continue to change in scholars' estimations. My work or those of my contemporaries does not mark any closure on the subject of USA/ANC relations or on the ANC itself, but marks the beginning of a whole new chapter of historical debate and interrogation. A further stimulant for such interrogation will be provided by the new administration and policies of the first Black US President, Barack Obama.<sup>7</sup>

The process has already commenced with the production of a number of scholarly works. These include among others, those by scholars such as Mark Gevisser, Ronald Suresh Roberts, Richard Calland and Sean Jacobs, William Mervin Gumede, Andrew Feinstein, and the SADET Volumes.<sup>8</sup> Consistent with this growth of literature is the historiographical trend which sees the ANC's work and leadership undergoing critical scrutiny as was the case at the 2004 Conference in Durban, its post apartheid policies and actions being challenged and its difficulties of leadership, including personal and political tensions, being interrogated. Perhaps the most striking feature of this trend is the focus on political contradictions and challenges, including those of party betrayal and party failure to respond to the needs of millions of South Africans in a post apartheid order, rather than on the freedom struggle itself.<sup>9</sup>

In essence then I could justifiably point out that in respect of current historical scholarship, studies focusing on the state of the nation or those which demonstrate evidence of intensive political analysis, are in vogue. According to South Africa's *Mail and Guardian*, "People are suddenly more interested in the political state of South Africa and with the elections coming up, want to know more about the past and their

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<sup>7</sup> The required changes by the external examiners of this dissertation were undertaken during the early months of Barack Obama's presidency.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Gevisser. *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* (Jeppestown. Jonathan Ball, 2007); Ronald Suresh Roberts. *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence* (Johannesburg. STE Publishers, 2006); Richard Calland and Sean Jacobs. *Thabo Mbeki's World: The Politics and Ideology of the South African President* (London. ZED Books, 2003); William Mervin Gumede. *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle For the Soul of the ANC* (London. ZED Books, 2006); Andrew Feinstein. *After the Party: A Personal and Political Journey Inside the ANC* (Johannesburg. Jonathan Ball, 2007); SADET (South African Democracy Education Trust). At the intervention of former President Thabo Mbeki, SADET was launched in 2004, as a Project Trust to address the issue of the lack of adequate research available on South African's freedom Struggle. SADET. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. Vol. 2 (Pretoria. UNISA, 2006), SADET. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa. International Solidarity Part 1 and Part 2* Vol. 3 (Pretoria. UNISA, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> This trend excludes those such as Ronald Suresh Roberts who have instead taken to the strategy of defending and not interrogating subjects as he does with Thabo Mbeki.

leaders...people are looking for answers, people have a need to know what's going on."<sup>10</sup>  
This is consistency with my view that the country's citizens are looking for accountability from its ruling party, the African National Congress.

Writing fourteen years into a new democracy has necessitated a shifting historiographical focus guided by the access to information in the current political climate. But again I need to reiterate how writing about the ANC in a different time and a different political space has created tensions for me as well as for others. From my early involvement with the ANC as a student to my work for Nelson Mandela, through the presidential projects, I have been privileged to be part of a process which witnessed the movement transform itself from a liberation organisation to one governing a free nation

But starting out to write about the ANC in the midst of the post apartheid euphoria and then completing the study during the time of deep political crisis for the movement, has presented notable challenges resulting in a sense of regret and despair. The former years witnessed strategic interventions led by those such as Frene Ginwala and Nelson Mandela to use the ANC Archive to account to their people for their time in exile and to push for the realisation of that cherished ideal of free and fair access to information. Precedence was given to transparency over secrecy. But as I look back, I can now acknowledge with a great degree of certainty that in the current political climate, the Ginwala and Mandela moments have been lost.

In the Thabo Mbeki era, and specifically during his second term of office, it has become abundantly clear that the process of free and open access to data and my contribution in this area was being threatened by political intervention in the form of proposed intelligence legislation such as the *Protection of Information Bill*. What this demonstrates is that our *Bill of Rights*, a vital component of our *Constitution*, the premier example of our triumph over previous human rights violations, has come under threat. But before engaging with the latter, I find it pertinent to peruse the parameters of and reactions to the *Intelligence* legislation.

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<sup>10</sup> *Mail and Guardian* (8-14 August 2008). 5.

The South African state though its drafting team under Advocate Howard Varney argued that the bill aimed to “limit unnecessary secrecy while at the same time trying to achieve proper protection’ while the former Director-general of Intelligence, Mr. Barry Gilder premised its value on its ability to protect this country from its “adversaries.” In his ludicrous submission to the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Intelligence on the Protection of Information Bill, Gilder provided an explanation on those who could be described as “adversaries.” Included in this category were criminals, organised crime syndicates, extremists, foreign governments and countries who may resort to espionage.<sup>11</sup> As a country which received the support of almost every country of the globe in its fight for freedom, I find Gilder’s arguments on espionage not convincing enough.

In contrast to these submissions, the views of the *South African National Editor’s Forum (SANEF)* also merit consideration. As a body devoted to championing freedom of expression in South Africa, the views of SANEF clearly assist the process of contextualising the prevailing political climate. In a verbal submission to the same Ad Hoc Committee on Intelligence, SANEF crafted its presentation to focus on how freedom of expression rights in the Constitution could be eroded by the proposed bill.<sup>12</sup> In his presentation to the Committee, Raymond Louw, a representative of SANEF pointed out that:

This legislation is crucial in enabling the legislature to make a decision restriction whether this country is going to remain a democracy with all the elements of the free flow of information, access to information, informed citizenry able to make a choice, or start on the dangerous road to becoming an authoritarian state where officials become the gatekeepers preventing citizens from knowing what is going on let alone the extent of what is really going on.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pmg.org.za/report/20080611-protection-information-bill-briefing>. Set up in 1996, this is the website of the Parliamentary Monitoring Group which monitors South African Parliamentary committees. This legislation was dealt with by the Intelligence Committee at its 11 June 2008 meeting. The full text of this meeting together with the State’s scope and purpose of the bill can be viewed here. Barry Gilder’s submission to this committee on 29 July 2008 is also available here.

<sup>12</sup> Conversation with Raymond Louw, Editor and Publisher of *Southern Africa Report* and a representative of SANEF. Offices of the Ifa Lethu Foundation. 22 August 2008. SANEF was formed in October 1996 to protect media freedom and to overcome, through a programme of action, “past injustices in the media.” It comprises senior journalists and editors from all sectors of the media industry in the country. <http://www.sanef.org.za>.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Submission by South African National Editor’s Forum (SANEF) to the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Intelligence on the Protection of Information Bill’. (29 July 2008). 4. A copy of this submission was furnished by Raymond Louw. Copy in possession of author. Folder 3.

These views find synergy with my argument that the conception of bills such as the *Protection of Information Bill*, far from advancing the principles of a true democracy, are intended to consolidate power of state structures with a view to developing an authoritarian state.. The Mandela era of transparency, openness and free access to information and the Ginwala emphasis on accountability are in danger of being replaced by warped and devastating ideologies. One of our constitutional rights, the Freedom of Access to Information, needs to be guarded well into our future..

This observation allows me move back in time to reflect on our early days of freedom which accorded priority to issues such as human rights, our Constitution and our *Bill of Rights*. As South Africans we have always been proud of our *Bill of Rights*. Enshrined in our Constitution, this *Bill* provided the necessary attestation of basic human rights, which formed the cornerstone of the ANC's struggle. With regard to human rights, during its repressive regime, the apartheid state demonstrated little consideration for this ideal. As a result few South Africans knew anything about the meaning and importance of the rights declared in the *Universal declaration of Human Rights* and other documents. This justifiably led to accusations of South Africa's lack of a 'human rights culture.' It was precisely for this reason that victims of apartheid violence have always viewed the state as a violator of their basic rights. And so it was that the ANC, as a liberation movement in the 1950s and 1960s, initiated a blueprint on how people should live and on their entitlements. This was evident in the *Freedom Charter* which paved the way for the demise of apartheid, the *Bill of Rights* and the new Constitution-and today stands out internationally as a human rights document. But what I consider pertinent at this junction in my reflections is how freedom of access to information was positioned as a Human Right.

Included in the post apartheid *Constitution* was the constitutional right of access to information. The significance of the inclusion of this right has been appropriately captured by Iain Currie and Dale McKinley. According to Iain Currie, this inclusion "was motivated by a desire not to repeat the mistakes of the past"; while for McKinley "public access to information is the life-blood of any meaningful democratic participation."<sup>14</sup> As

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<sup>14</sup> Iain Curry. "South Africa's Promotion of Access to Information Act". *European Public Law*. (9), (1). 60. Dale T. McKinley. Draft report on "The State of Access to Information in South Africa." (July 2003). Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Johannesburg, 2.

an archivist and historical scholar who experienced the effects of information control and secrecy, I could fully identify with these views.

To enable the process of constitutional access, legislation in the form of the *Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA)* was passed in 2000 and again this represented a notable step in the realisation of a key democratic principle. For former struggle activist and then Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Penuell Maduna, PAIA meant “we are turning on the light to bring an end to the secrecy and silence that characterised decades of apartheid rule and administration.”<sup>15</sup> Given South Africans’ experiences of apartheid era closure and denial of access to information, the value apportioned to this critical piece of legislation was enthusiastically echoed by all sectors of society, including the archival sector. Being a relatively drastic piece of legislation, Archivist and then Director of the South African History Archive, Verne Harries described it as “the golden standard.”<sup>16</sup>

Precisely how important this discussion is in my analysis may be a matter of deep controversy. But what it demonstrates is that barely eight years after the passing of a remarkable piece of legislation, that intrinsic element of democracy is in danger of being eroded through intervention on the part of government as alluded to in my discussion of the proposed *Protection of Information Bill*. The TRC records still remain inaccessible on the grounds of their security classification through *PAIA*, with the shocking effect of having silenced the voices of ordinary South Africans who comprise the country’s previously disadvantaged and aggrieved sector of the population. The irony of this can be discerned from the fact that the testimonies presented to the TRC by the victims of gross human rights violations still remain concealed from the South African public, thirteen years later. That such a massive archive was generated from a process designed to ensure that the citizens of this country never forget a past riddled with trauma and pain finds resonance with Jacques Derrida’s pronouncements on the “exercise in forgetting.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In McKinley. “The State of Access to Information in South Africa.” 3 While PAIA was a step in the right direction, it failed to fulfil its function of ending secrecy and of providing public access to information. This is evident in the case of the TRC records, records of certain political parties and records of inherited state structures such as the South African National Defence Force, Military Intelligence and the Department of Safety and Security.

<sup>16</sup> This was communicated in an interview undertaken by McKinley.

<sup>17</sup> Harris. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An Exercise in Forgetting*. September 2002, *Online*, 1.

What appears vexing is that the South African democratic state would prefer that South Africans forget about the TRC and its Archive, reinforcing the Derrida consideration and displaying the ironies and vulnerabilities of a post apartheid political order devoted to closing the lines to free and fair access to information. But the French Philosopher's warning on how what is forgotten may return in a number of unforeseen ways must be heeded. For this warning has relevance as demonstrated through the dilemmas experienced by the recent Thabo Mbeki administration as it moved rapidly through a process of solidifying its power.

As I commenced with this concluding chapter for my study of ANC/USA Relations, a major shift has just pervaded South Africa's political landscape. President Thabo Mbeki, South Africa's second democratic President, was recalled by his party, the ANC, and subsequently asked to resign.<sup>18</sup> Kgalema Motlanthe, the former Secretary-General of the ANC, replaced him as the third democratic President until South Africa's next general election in 2009.

The current situation in South Africa is illustrative of things falling apart for a regime that has lost touch with the principles of a National Democratic Revolution. While actions such as that of President Mbeki's axing by his own party, may justifiably be cause for alarm, it is also a very uplifting sign for the direction of South Africa's new democracy. While such positive developments may not be visible immediately, this is a sign of the importance of the need for the re-implementation of a value system originally implemented by the Mandela Presidency years. These included integrity and commitment to the country's new Constitution and the principles enshrined in that document, including the internationally recognised and respected South African *Bill of Rights*.

The relationship between Mr. Mbeki's axing by his party and my work is significant. Starting out as the ANC's Archivist, I believe that I contributed to the material being preserved and made accessible to all South Africans. Subsequently upon undertaking this study, I took on the role of producer of history by interpreting the material I have helped to collect and preserve, specifically in relation to the ANC's attempts to develop a relationship with the USA. Hence President's Mbeki's actions over the last eight years

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<sup>18</sup> Trying to manipulate judicial proceeding against his successor Jacob Zuma, Mbeki was accused of abusing state power. This led to the ANC's call for him to resign. *Pretoria News* (25 September 2008)

have clearly threatened my work in both respects. As I have contended and demonstrated in my opening chapter, the ANC in setting up its Archive from 1993, emphasised the need for transparency and public access. By the time of the implementation of its Oral History Project in 2000, the influence of newly elected President Mbeki's leadership style began to take root and this was evidenced by greater control of the Archives Unit and Archives Sub-Committee. Since 2000, this leadership style began to infiltrate even state structures, as seen by efforts such as the *Protection of Information Bill*, all culminating in his devastating attempts to compromise the independence of South Africa's judiciary. That the decay had set in was obvious and that South Africans would not take too kindly to the leader of one of the African continent's greatest liberation movements abusing their human rights was obvious. For historical scholarship his actions created a climate of despondency which contrasts sharply with the optimism associated with the Mandela years. Mbeki had failed millions of South Africans. The ANC, recognising his attempts to force a metamorphosis of the movement, took the bold and courageous step of recalling the country's President from his post, thus preventing an erosion of the foundations of a strong democratic order.

In spite of the shocking trend of South Africa's political leadership our dreams are still too romantic. Recognising that there is more openness in USA access legislation, all South Africans like myself, having emerged from the shackles of an oppressive apartheid regime need to take ownership though our scholarship, of efforts to aggressively protect the value of information. For this information can be free only for as long as a political regime will allow this. Drawing on the legacy inherited from Africa's oldest liberation organisation, the African National Congress, we can again become agencies of change and not victims of oppression.

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