

# Mandela - Tambo Lecture Series

## 4th Lecture

City of Glasgow College  
16 September 2011

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Mandela - Tambo: friends, comrades, leaders, legacy

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Professor Denis Goldberg



**CITY** OF GLASGOW  
COLLEGE

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## BACKGROUND to the GLASGOW MANDELA-TAMBO LECTURE SERIES

On 4 August 1981, Glasgow awarded Nelson Mandela the Freedom of the City, the first City to do so.

As Mandela was still in prison, the honour was accepted on his behalf by the Vice-President of Nigeria, Dr Alex Ekwueme, a former student at the University of Strathclyde. On the same day, following the ceremony, a meeting hosted by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and chaired by Brian Filling was addressed by Vice-President, Dr Alex Ekwueme; Lord Provost, Michael Kelly; and the African National Congress Chief Representative in the UK, Ruth Mompati.

Following the award of Freedom of the city, Glasgow in association with the Anti-Apartheid Movement continued the campaign to win Mandela's release. The Lord Provost of Glasgow launched a world-wide Lord Mayors petition at the United Nations in New York in 1981; the street, which housed the Apartheid South African Consulate, was re-named Nelson Mandela Place in 1986; the city's Lord Provost led a deputation of UK Lord Provosts, Lord Mayors and Mayors to No 10 Downing St to petition Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher; and in 1988 a march was launched from Glasgow to London calling for Nelson Mandela to be released on his seventieth birthday.

The Glasgow Green rally in 1988, which sent off the 25 marchers (one for each of the years that Mandela had been in jail) to walk to London, was addressed by Oliver Tambo, President of the African National Congress.

On 11 February 1990 Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

He came to Glasgow to collect the Freedom of 9 UK cities at a special, single ceremony on 9 October 1993.

Nelson Mandela was elected President of the Republic of South Africa, following the first democratic elections in that country, in April 1994.

2006 was the 25th Anniversary of Nelson Mandela receiving the Freedom of the city of Glasgow.

OR Tambo, who had led the ANC throughout the period of Mandela's imprisonment, died in 1993. He was born on 27 October 1917. So 2007 marked the 90th anniversary of his birth.

In discussions between Glasgow City Council, the South African High Commission and ACTSA Scotland (Action for Southern Africa), the successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement, it was agreed to mark the 25th anniversary of Nelson

Mandela receiving the Freedom of the City and to celebrate OR Tambo's 90th anniversary by initiating a lecture series. It was to be named the Mandela-Tambo Lecture series. It was also agreed to ask each of the universities in Glasgow and Glasgow Metropolitan College to host, in turn, an annual Freedom Lecture.

The Inaugural Lecture in the Mandela-Tambo series was held in the Banqueting Hall of the City Chambers, George Square on 26 October 2006.

The platform party comprised Brian Filling, chair; Baillie Gordon Mathieson, who welcomed guests on behalf of the Lord Provost and the City Council; and Her Excellency, Dr Lindiwe Mabuza, South African High Commissioner.

The Inaugural Lecture, "The International Legacy of Oliver Reginald Tambo 1917-1993" was delivered by Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, South African Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The 2008 lecture was given by the Mozambican High Commissioner in the UK, His Excellency, Antonio Gumende, and was entitled: "Solidarity and Partnerships in the 21st century: the challenge of achieving the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) in Mozambique.

The lecture was delivered as the keynote speech at the ACTSA Scotland conference on 25 October 2008 and was hosted by Professor Pamela Gillies, Principal and Vice Chancellor, at Glasgow Caledonian University.

The 2010 lecture was delivered by Ronnie Kasrils, former Minister in the South African government. The lecture was held as the book launch of Ronnie Kasrils' book, "The Unlikely Secret Agent". Glasgow University hosted the lecture and book launch in the University Chapel on 1 December 2010.

On 4 August 2011, a plaque was unveiled in Glasgow City Chambers by the Lord Provost, Councillor Bob Winter and Professor Denis Goldberg on the 30th anniversary of Nelson Mandela receiving the Freedom of the City. To coincide with the 30th anniversary a booklet, "The Glasgow Mandela Story", by Brian Filling, was published by ACTSA Scotland in association with Glasgow City Council.

The 2011 lecture, "Mandela-Tambo: friends, comrades, leaders, legacy" was given by Professor Denis Goldberg, fellow Rivonia trialist with Nelson Mandela, and who spent 22 years in an apartheid prison. The Lecture was hosted by the City of Glasgow College on 16 September 2011.

**Brian Filling  
Chair, ACTSA Scotland**



Oliver Tambo (centre) with Archbishop Trevor Huddleston and Brian Filling with Abdul Minty behind Glasgow Green, 12 June 1988. (photographs: Alan Wylie)



Nelson Mandela, Marah Louw and Brian Filling. George Square, Glasgow, 9 October 1993 (photograph: Alan Wylie)



Nelson Mandela in George Square, Glasgow, 9 October 1993 (photograph: David Pratt)

## INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME by Paul Little, Principal, City of Glasgow College

Professor Goldberg, Deputy High Commissioner, Honorary Consul/Chair ACTSA Scotland Brian Filling, Honoured guests,

I am delighted to welcome you to City of Glasgow College, Scotland's newest & largest college.

I am especially delighted to welcome you in this auspicious year, the 30th anniversary of the City of Glasgow presenting the Freedom of the City to Nelson Mandela back in 1981, the first city in the world to make him a freeman – this was a very controversial decision back in 1981 when Mandela was still a prisoner of the apartheid state. Back then in 1986 the city renamed St George's Place, the location of the South African consulate, as Nelson Mandela Place in his honour.

Professor Goldberg only recently honoured the city by unveiling a plaque to commemorate this 30th anniversary.

It is a great honour and I believe very important for an educational centre such as ours to keep alive the lessons from the struggles of the past. Great figures from that era like Dennis Goldberg and Nelson Mandela stood up for and have "cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities". These are values that this college wishes to espouse and nurture and are key to our role in society.

Scotland and Glasgow in particular has a very special relationship with South Africa, not only in the City's support of the anti apartheid movement but in supporting educational development and exchange between our countries and their institutions.

Our legacy colleges, not least through Brian Filling here, have a long association with educational institutions in Johannesburg, Pretoria and the Eastern Cape.

Over recent years our students have been happy to support the charity Community Heart and we have been very grateful to Brian for raising awareness amongst our

student body of the issues faced in other communities.

We are honoured therefore to host the Mandela-Tambo lecture at City of Glasgow College and privileged to have Professor Goldberg here to deliver the lecture.



Platform party (from left to right) Janis Carson, Vice Principal, City of Glasgow College, Professor Denis Goldberg, Bongwiwe Qwabe, South African Depute High Commissioner, Paul Little, Principal, City of Glasgow College, Brian Filling, Honorary Consul for South Africa (photograph: Brian Purdie)

## BIOGRAPHY of Professor Denis Goldberg

Denis Theodore Goldberg was born in Cape Town in 1933, South Africa, the son of London born parents, who had emigrated to South Africa.

He grew up in Cape Town and was awarded a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Cape Town. From 1953 onwards he was active in the Modern Youth Society, a non-racial organisation in Cape Town. He joined other leading white activists in forming the Congress of Democrats. The Congress of Democrats allied itself with the African National Congress and other Congresses in the Congress Alliance. He was a member of the illegal South African Communist Party, which had been banned by the apartheid regime in 1950, after the Nationalist Party came to power. He was detained in 1960, as was his mother, and spent four months in prison without trial.

When the underground armed wing of the African National Congress, Umkhonto we Sizwe was founded in 1961, Goldberg became technical officer. In 1963 he was arrested at Lilliesleaf farm, Rivonia, headquarters of the armed wing. He was sentenced in 1964 at the end of the famous Rivonia Trial to four terms of life imprisonment along with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki,



Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni and Elias Motsoaledi. Denis was the only white and was sent to a white prison in Pretoria while the others were sent to Robben Island. Whilst in prison he took degrees in Public Administration, History and Geography, and in Library Science. He was halfway through a law degree when he was released after 22 years in prison in 1985. On his release he went into exile in London where he joined his family. In London he resumed his work in the African National Congress (ANC) in its London office from 1985 to 1994. He was spokesperson for the ANC and also represented it at the Anti-Apartheid Committee of the United Nations. A large group of US organisations presented Denis Goldberg with the Albert Luthuli Peace Prize in recognition of his work

against apartheid. He did speaking tours for the African National Congress in many countries in Europe, Scandinavia, and Asia as well as in North America. His exiled family had been active for many years in the Woodcraft Folk, a British movement for children and young people, committed to fostering equality and cooperation, and he became its president until the position was abolished at his request.

After the first democratic, non-racial elections in South Africa Denis Goldberg founded the development organisation Community H.E.A.R.T. (Health, Education and Reconstruction Training) in the UK in 1995 to assist with the Reconstruction and Development Programme in South Africa. Since that date through its Book Appeal, Community H.E.A.R.T. has sent almost 3 million books to South Africa. Other projects have assisted with the overcoming of the legacy of apartheid, including raising over £1 million for the Rape Crisis Centre in Cape Town. With the support of German friends Denis also established Community H.E.A.R.T. e.V. in Essen in Germany in 1996.

In 1999 Denis Goldberg was awarded an Honorary LL.D. degree by Glasgow Caledonian University. He has also been awarded an Honorary PH.D degree by the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA).

Goldberg first married Johannesburg born Esme Bodenstein, a London-trained physiotherapist, who was herself briefly held in solitary confinement in 1963 before going into exile in London with their young children Hilary and David. Only allowed to see Denis twice in twenty years, Esme's house in East Finchley in north London provided a haven for many South African political refugees and a wide variety of other itinerants. When her husband was released she wished to remain in London and he remained with her in London until her death in 2000. Their daughter Hilary died in 2002 from cancer.

Goldberg returned to South Africa in 2002 and was appointed Special Adviser to Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry until 2004. He continued as Special Adviser to Minister Buyelwa Sonjica until 2006 when he retired.

In 2002 Goldberg had married Edelgard Nkobi, a German journalist and widow of Zenzo Nkobi, the son of ANC Treasurer General Thomas Nkobi. Goldberg was again widowed in 2006 when Edelgard died after a long battle with cancer. Denis lives in Hout Bay, near Cape Town, where he is active in the local community. He continues to travel abroad on speaking tours. The Randburg ANC branch has renamed itself the Denis Goldberg branch.



In 2010 he published his autobiography, *The Mission: A Life for Freedom in South Africa* (STE Publishers, Johannesburg) and a German edition, *der Auftrag, ein leben fuer die Freiheit in Suedafrika* (Assoziation A Verlag, Berlin and Hamburg)..

- Denis Goldberg was awarded the Order of Luthuli in Silver by the President of South Africa in 2010.
- UNISON, the UK trade union has made him an honorary life member along with Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi.
- In 2011 he was awarded the German Cross of the Order of Merit for his work in strengthening relations between Germany and South Africa.
- In 2012 he was awarded the South African Military Veterans Medal in Platinum for his services in the armed struggle against apartheid.
- The Ghandi Development Trust has decided to award him its Satyagraha Award for his sacrifices for human rights.

The Glasgow Mandela-Tambo Lecture 2011

Address by

**Professor Denis Goldberg**

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**“MANDELA-TAMBO: friends, comrades, leaders, legacy”**

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**City of Glasgow College  
13 September 2011**



Good Evening.

Since this is alleged to be a lecture I have to start very formally by thanking my hosts and greeting the dignitaries present: The Deputy High Commissioner of South Africa, Councillors of the City of Glasgow, colleagues from Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Strathclyde and Glasgow University. I mentioned GCU first because they just happened to give me an honorary doctorate so they get priority. The Principal of the City of Glasgow College where we are gathered tonight, the chairperson of ACTSA Scotland, who as you have heard is also the Honorary Consul of South Africa in Scotland. They are the sponsors of this evening and I thank them all and thank them for representing their institutions here. And, then of course, there are the most important people of all, ladies and gentlemen, the Scottish people.

It's lovely to be here and one says, in case I have left out somebody who is important and feels hurt: "all protocol observed."

I don't normally read speeches but since this is advertised as a lecture, I am going to start by reading. I am greatly honoured to have been invited to deliver this lecture but I prefer to call it a talk, because that is what I am going to do, just talk about Mandela and Tambo, friends, comrades, leaders and their legacy as an inspiration for future generations.

I want to tell you about my experience of these two really great people who were also my friends and comrades and leaders of such calibre that we were prepared to follow them to the ends of the earth and beyond. Not because they were populist rabble rousers, but because they were thoughtful, committed leaders who had a great thought, a vision, and with that vision a dignified, consistent readiness to find the necessary strategies and tactics to realize that vision. They were ready to sacrifice their lives for that vision: a vision of freedom, freedom from racial oppression by law in the land of their birth, South Africa, a vision of freedom from want, and respect for the dignity of all people. For without dignity, we are all denied our essential humanity.

I have an old comrade in Cape Town who recently took part in making a film about my life in which she says that what

has been achieved is that black South Africans now feel they are citizens in their own land because they have the vote. They can sit in parliament as she did, and be part of the law making process instead of being mere objects of the law, because "we are free from the 'apartheid crime against humanity.'"

I must add that our struggle led to the definition by the UN General Assembly of that crime: it is the denial by states of human dignity, of oppression, of exclusion because of race from the rights contained in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and other such documents. It is a definition that is relevant today, for example in relation to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We need to remember that it's applicable in other countries too.

You know, I have often wondered why Scots should be honouring these two South Africans, Mandela and Tambo and then people come and say nice things about me as well. It's very nice to keep coming back to hear these nice remarks. But there is truly a long history of contact between Scotland and South Africa. Of course, the early contact was that of Scottish soldiers serving the British Empire in the conquest of South Africa. But also there were missionaries and educators who played an important role through institutions such as the Lovedale College in the Eastern Cape Province.

Many leaders of the African people gained their knowledge of the modern world at that institution. And in South Africa we have just been celebrating the life of one Tiyo Sogo, a poet, a writer, an educator, one of the first modernists it is said. He studied in Scotland and was married to a Scottish woman. He learned at the feet of the missionaries, especially, I think, the Reverend Govan who started the college and actually educated black children and white children of officials in the same school and in the same classrooms until quite late on. In the end Lovedale College was forced by apartheid laws to be a segregated institution.

There were other links, for example freedom of the press, as Brian has just mentioned. It has been a burning issue for a very long time and in South Africa in the 19th century a journalist, John Fairbairn, founder of a newspaper, fought for the freedom of the press in South Africa. It was very important then and, as you will know, there is a Bill currently passed by Parliament and awaiting to pass through the second chamber, the national Council of Provinces. The Bill gives officials the power to declare documents classified. Possession of such documents and citing them for whatever reason, even whistle blowing about fraud, illegal conduct and the like can lead to 15 years in prison. Many of us are unhappy about this for Freedom of the Press is important today as well.



I must say there is a tremendous literature on the links between Scotland and South Africa and since this is not a lecture just a talk (!), I suggest that you go onto the internet and look for the material yourselves. It's worth doing.

In recent years we saw the role of the Scottish Committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement now called ACTSA Scotland (Action for Southern Africa) and, as was mentioned earlier, the City of Glasgow recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of awarding Nelson Mandela the Freedom the City in 1981.

I must say I find it interesting that the founders of this lecture decided to call it the Mandela - Tambo Lecture because not many people recognise Oliver Tambo in the way that Nelson Mandela has been recognised.

The United Nations have declared the 18th July, Nelson Mandela's birthday, as International Nelson Mandela Day and asked people to do 67 minutes of good works, social work in whatever country they're in, in honour of Nelson Mandela. Why this crazy idea of 67 minutes? Well, before he retired he spent 67 years involved in the struggle for freedom and for human dignity, so a minute for each of those years is what we are asked to do. It's a big thing in South Africa and I hope it will grow in importance around the world. But isn't it amazing that this man who was reviled as a

terrorist by apartheid and its international supporters, should now be this icon that we honour in this way. It is very nice but sometimes it's also painful you know, because he was so reviled and we were reviled for fighting against this awful oppression and denial of human dignity by racism by law, and now people forget what it takes to win freedom. They think that freedom just falls from the trees and that Nelson Mandela alone brought freedom.

Oliver Tambo was his bosom buddy. They were partners in a law practice. They met in the African National Congress Youth League in the 1940's. Together with others behaving like young Turks, young leaders, they were able to transform the African National Congress from a petitioning small elite group, who tried, by writing beautiful letters in wonderful mission school English, to change the political policies and social and economic policies which excluded the African people and Coloured people and Indian people in South Africa from their rights as human beings, into a mass movement, a mass activist movement, a movement of mass mobilisation of the people.

There were various campaigns and this had its effect on Scottish people as well and really it's not surprising that Scotland, Glasgow in particular, and the institutions I mentioned as our hosts should be interested in my country and some of its greatest leaders.

You have a worker's Poet Laureate, Hamish Henderson. He wrote in translation in his "Freedom Come All Ye":

The fresh wind in the clear days dawning/  
blows the clouds helter skelter over the bay/  
but there's more than a fresh wind blowing/  
through the great glen of the world today/  
it's a thought that will spread throughout the world.  
He makes it clear that he is indeed writing about freedom and that also means freedom from harassment by Scottish soldiers (for the Empire of course) as I mentioned earlier and he says, "broken families in lands we've harried/  
Will curse 'Scotland the Brave' no more, no more." Racism will have been defeated – "black and white to each other married." He continues: and "All the bairns of Adam will find bread and barley bree and painted room," when "A black boy from yon Nyanga/  
tears down the evil gallows of their apartheid masters."

Well, the gallows have been torn down, and we have set about trying to ensure that all the children, all my millions of children, shall have enough to eat and a decent home to live in. But we South Africans are sensitive to nuances and would have preferred that the poet had said "yon black man" rather than "boy", for those who led and inspired the young activists to overcome apartheid were indeed great men and, in apartheid South Africa, whites referred to African men of whatever age as "boy". It was an insult, but

why should a Scot know that? We know the meaning of what Hamish Henderson was saying.

And I have to say, we talk about the Mandela and Tambo Lecture, but we could equally talk about Tambo and Mandela. They were so close. Their lives were so intertwined and they are rare people who despite the years of physical separation, one in exile and the other in prison, were very close to each other. They are two of the greatest of those many rare people in my country, South Africa, who would sacrifice everything for the goal of freedom and equality for all the people of South Africa. This depth of African humanism, what Archbishop Tutu calls Ubuntu, the guiding spirit of their political beliefs and actions, is what makes them so special. But of course they were, as I have said, great leaders who inspired us in the darkest years, and now in the brighter years of our freedom.

Archbishop Mpilo Desmond Tutu, there's another rare one, who with Nelson Mandela was a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and of course the names of Chief Albert John Mvumbi Luthuli have to be added and FW de Klerk the last apartheid President should be added to them. People revile him, of course, for coming so late to understand the immorality of apartheid, but he made the move, and he did lead the change. I think he put his life on the line because the apartheid security forces hated the change. They believed, as

so many military people do, that killing solves all problems.

In the four years between Nelson Mandela's release in 1990 and Nelson Mandela becoming president in 1994, they murdered between ten and twelve thousand people and probably more in the hope of turning the wheels back. Yet they call it a bloodless revolution because our media in South Africa, and the world, still find it hard to recognise black people as human and their blood as significant blood. It makes me very angry; not bitter, angry. There is a difference between these two sentiments.

I mentioned these Nobel Prize winners, people who have received international recognition but, you know, Oliver Tambo who led the ANC in exile for 30 years, and held it together is not so recognized. 30 years of leading an exile movement is a tremendous achievement because in exile movements there are lots of little factions, lots of frustrated elements but he was able to hold it together and I am not quite sure how he did it. While he's never received this kind of international recognition, one of the highest awards in our country is called The Order of the Companions of O R Tambo. People get prizes in his name instead of him getting a prize. For him the prize was freedom. The award of Companion of the Order of O R Tambo is for non-South Africans who contributed significantly to the liberation of South Africa and now to the rebuilding of South

Africa. There are people I could name in this room who deserve that award but it would be inappropriate to do so. It seems to me, that the saying, "cometh the time, cometh the man (or the people)" has a certain truth. It was the times we lived through that provided the conditions for the emergence of these people to greatness. The prize, as I said, was not recognition by others. The prize was the achievement of freedom for all our people.

I am sure everyone recalls Nelson Mandela's closing remarks at the end of his four hour long address to the court in the Rivonia Trial. To paraphrase, he said, "that all his life he had fought against white domination and he had fought against black domination. He had upheld the ideal of a society in which all could live together in peace and harmony. He hoped to live to see that ideal achieved, but if needs be he was prepared to die for it". What a moving speech.

Hidden behind the words, of course, was the challenge to the judge and to the whole of white South Africa, to hang us. I asked him quite recently why the judge didn't hang us. He said, "because I challenged him to and he didn't dare." Well, maybe that was the reason. I think it was the quality of the speech. I think, as Brian said, this was meant to be a show trial, to show what terrorists we were and it turned out that it showed the world the brutality and immorality of apartheid.

Nelson Mandela in his speech set out his childhood, the nature of the oppression, why he'd become a political activist, a peaceful activist in the African National Congress; why in the the Congress Alliance with the Indian National Congress, he followed the satayagraha principle of Mahatma Ghandi, relying on peaceful protest and passive resistance; and, eventually, why he had turned to the armed struggle. He did it with clarity, in a principled reasoned way. He explained to the court that there were two turning points, one was the massacre at Sharpsville when 69 people were murdered and close to 200 people wounded in peaceful protest against the pass laws. There were killings in Langa in Cape Town on the same day, though much fewer in number, but Parliament was in session there and panicked into declaring a State of Emergency. 20,000 people arrested.

My mother went to prison then, and so did I. Now you know where my politics come from! Most had four months in prison, some had five months, and we came out knowing that nothing had changed, other than greater repression. But we knew we could withstand prison and we went back to our political tasks.

In 1961 there was a general strike against apartheid policies. It was suppressed with every bit of military might apartheid South Africa could muster. At that time they could put 200,000 men in the field,

the most powerful military force in Africa. And, at that point, the decision was taken to create Umkhonto we Sizwe, the Spear of the Nation, the armed wing. I followed into that movement. I had been arguing for it for a year and I was happy to see the change of policy. I believed in the need to overthrow the apartheid state, a tyrannical regime, and if it needed force of arms, we were prepared to do it.

Bear in mind, our generation had seen what had happened in Spain when a legitimate social democratic elected government was overthrown by the fascist states. Britain, America, France and others all supported the fascists, not the peoples' social democrat government. We saw in World War Two, partisans fighting behind the lines, in Europe, in the Far East against militarist Japan, in Italy against the fascists there, and I suppose, I have to quote Winston Churchill, who wanted the guerillas, supported by his Special Operations Executive, to 'set Europe ablaze from end to end.' We were prepared to do that in South Africa too - to be free. During that war, the western allies, Roosevelt and Churchill, met and they published the Atlantic Charter which "promoted the end of colonialism" as one of their war aims which would result from the defeat of the Nazis. We were not going to have colonies after World War Two!! But, America just took over from where Britain left off, you know.

Our people, especially the youth, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Lembede and Mda, and others, said they were going to make sure that colonialism would end in South Africa. That's why they wanted a mass movement. They wanted an activist movement. These things kind of hang together.

You know, what was equally important about Nelson Mandela as a leader of Umkhonto we Sizwe was that he didn't call for armed action and then stand back. He was the Commander in Chief prepared to take the risks he called upon others to take.

He was eventually brought from prison for some other offences to be Number One accused in the Rivonia Trial and they found his diaries and personal documents. This was a serious politician. If you are going to be a military man you read military theory. If you are going to be a politician you read political philosophy. You seriously analyse political systems, his notes showed it, and that speech, as I said, transformed the way in which our liberation movement was perceived throughout the world, that we were fighting for democracy, against prejudice, for equality, for equal rights of all human beings.

At the end of the Rivonia trial the Judge found us guilty of conspiracy to overthrow the state by force of arms and

related charges. In passing sentence, the Judge said that the death penalty was the appropriate sentence but he would show the only lenience he could, and we started to smile, Nelson too. And when he said the sentence was life imprisonment we laughed out loud. It was a great moment in our lives but, imagine what sort of a country, what sort of a country if Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu and the others in that trial had been sentenced to death and had the executions taken place. At a personal level, I have to report that I am quite pleased I'm able to be here tonight! (audience laughter and interjection "and so are we!") Thank you, thank you.

Just before the sentence was passed, my comrade Raymond Mhlaba, who was one of the eight convicted in our trial, came to me during a pause in the proceedings, because we were in separate parts of the prison: apartheid ruled supreme! He said, "Comrade Denis, if there are death sentences we will not appeal against them. " "Oh," I said, "and why not?" and he said, "Well, it's important that we get out of the way; let them hang us. Our people will be so angry they will rise up and overthrow the apartheid regime." Martyrdom is quite an appealing thing to some, you know. And I said, "You know comrade, I am not sure that governments are as stupid as you think they are. I think they will wait till they've got the situation under control then they will top us one at a time and see what happens." Actually, I was afraid they would go for me, because

to go for Nelson Mandela would have led indeed to an uprising but, me, I was the white traitor to the apartheid cause and if they topped me, well, the whites would have rejoiced and I doubt if my African comrades would have risen up in defence of me. I'm being politically serious now. I'm not joking about it, and I said, "but more than that, comrade Raymond, it's taken 30 years to make you the leader you are, you and the others and we're going to need you when we come to rebuilding our country. "Oh," he said, "thank you, comrade, for the compliment."

Many years later, a week before he died, I went to visit him in his sick bed in Port Elizabeth and we were laughing about this incident because he said, "We never had to put it to the test did we?" and we had a laugh again, all those years later, but we had a stone cold sober discussion about whether we should have allowed ourselves to be topped without a fight or not.

I want to talk about Oliver Reginald Tambo or O R as we called him. At the time, before the State of Emergency in 1960, the ANC National Executive had sent him abroad to win support for the struggle against apartheid. He was a kind of super diplomat for the ANC and he had considerable success in Africa and in Europe. He followed the ANC's approach of mobilising people to mobilise governments. I talked about them meeting in the 1940's when they set up the first black legal practice in South



Denis Goldberg with OR Tambo, when he was recuperating in Sweden

Africa. They were partners in a law firm of solicitors. They needed offices near the Law courts. It was illegal for them to occupy those offices because they were designated for whites only. But, how can you practise law if you can't be near the Law Courts? So, they simply occupied offices and the apartheid regime let them go on, but those offices became political headquarters, so to speak, where people would allegedly go for legal consultations and... talk politics. I suppose the place was bugged but there was not much the apartheid system could do about it. Oliver Tambo once told me that Nelson Mandela loved a fight. He was tall and imposing. When he practised law, he would appear in court and white magistrates would not allow him to sit at the lawyers tables in the front. They would put a special table for him at the

back, away from all the white lawyers and he would then protest and the magistrate would threaten him with a fine for contempt of court, "Sit where I tell you!" Of course, Nelson would have then appealed and the magistrate's decision would have been overturned because of the bias and so on because we still had some honest judges. And so, Oliver told me that when they wanted a fight, they would send Nelson because Nelson loved to tower over his opponent and wag his finger at him. He really did revel in it. But, O R was sent abroad and after the decision to undertake the armed struggle had more or less been taken, Nelson Mandela went abroad. As he couldn't get a passport, he simply left and went abroad, travelled through Africa.

There was an amusing incident that he talked about. He was in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia and he was to fly to Accra in Ghana. He got into an Ethiopian airlines plane, looked in the cockpit, the pilot was black and he thought, "is there another pilot? Is this alright?" He tells the story, to say, that even he, the leader of a liberation movement, had to catch himself and say, "Why am I so brainwashed?" It's an interesting comment that he could be so honest about it and talk about it, to illustrate the point. Steve Bantu Biko was a much younger person, a leader of the Black Consciousness Movement and he summed up his whole philosophical concept of freedom and the struggle for freedom in the statement: "You can

only be free if you believe you can be free!" In other words, that you can and must overcome the brainwashing by the oppressor. It was a very important movement and inspired many young South Africans, who later turned to the African National Congress as the organisation of choice. Not all of them, of course, but many. Steve Biko was murdered by the security police.

I was saying that the decision to undertake the armed struggle really affected Oliver Tambo's work because, once the armed struggle was being undertaken, there were governments who had been friendly towards the ANC who were now hostile or lukewarm, and especially colonial governments. They have this ..., did you know, they have dual standards about violence and brutality. When they are violent it's all very well; it's civilizing. When the oppressed turn round to say we want to be free and we are going to take freedom by our own means, they say, "violence is wrong you know, it's inhuman." The result of this decision on O R was that he was no longer just a super diplomat. He was the leader of a movement that needed to feed soldiers who'd been sent out of the country, needed to find countries that would provide place for camps for military training, and to find the countries who would train them and support them, provide the weapons, the military material and so on. O R who had lived with his wife,

Adelaide, in London and travelled backwards and forwards up and down in Africa in piston engine planes, with little or no money, flying from one capital to another, hoping that his hosts would pay the airfare to the next place. He had a little suitcase and a little portable typewriter. Do you remember old portable typewriters? Some of you are old enough to remember them. Writing speeches, persuading people, flying to New York, to the United Nations demanding the end of the Rivonia trial, demanding a definition of apartheid, mobilizing support, mobilizing for the armed struggle. His wife, Adelaide, had a very tough time. She lived in London. They had children. She was a nurse. She worked two shifts to feed the family and provide the pocket money for O R to survive. And, it's in the nature of things that movements take for granted what wives give and sacrifice and I understand now why so often she was angered by intolerance of her and of women in general. But you know O R had been elected Deputy President of the ANC before he had been sent out of the country and now with the leadership in prison through the Rivonia trial and the many trials throughout the country he was de facto the leader. He would not accept the title of President. He said, only the people, the members, can elect him and he had not been elected so he was Deputy President until the exiled National Executive said, "stop this nonsense,

you are the President and will be the President." The modesty on his part was not false modesty. It was a genuine belief that the title was less important than the work he was doing, and equally Nelson Mandela's speech in the trial, was the key to the campaign "Free Mandela" that Tambo led and the ANC and the solidarity movements around the world carried on for many years. Do you remember the Wembley concert? Do you remember? Was it 600 million people who watched on television? And the big artists who performed? And you know, artists and rock artists, pop artists, their managements don't want controversy but the issue of racism and apartheid was so strong these rock musicians in Britain and, all over the world took a lead in mobilising support. It was a tremendous occasion. Do you remember (singing), "Free, Free Nelson Mandela"? I'm keeping my daytime job, I'm not going to sing for a living! Nelson Mandela was offered Honorary Doctorates and cities gave him the freedom of the city, named streets and places like, Nelson Mandela Place. Universities and students wanted to honour him. Then they started offering them to O R Tambo and he said "No, No, give them to my friend Nelson, he's in prison." Until in the end our National Executive said, "You have to accept them and you deserve them," and so he reluctantly agreed. He was that kind of a man. The title, the honours were not important; doing the work was important.

O R Tambo was a revolutionary thinker; he was a humanist, a leader, he could inspire people to follow. When I was released and went to the ANC Headquarters in Lusaka he would come out from his office into the compound where there were always people hanging around and as he stepped out they would snap to attention, saluting: 'Comrade Commander,' and he would sort of saunter over to somebody and say, "How's your uncle", or some similar remark. He knew everybody by name. He knew the families and he had a genuine concern for people and I think people loved him and would go to do whatever he wanted. But he wasn't casual about things. He demanded that people do the job. We're in a revolution, our people are suffering, we have to do the work. I think he was also known as the Protector, the Protector of the young and the vulnerable and he was indeed such a person. All of our people were vulnerable and he protected us all.

In the 30 years of exile politics there were two revolts: one a group of four and a group of eight. It never spread further because of the sheer brilliance of his leadership. He had this knack of sometimes not agreeing and not disagreeing. He knew where he wanted the thing to go and people would argue and he would say, "yes, that's very interesting, we need to talk about it." In the meantime, it was going in his direction.

And, I can tell you, when I came out of prison and people said I must have sold out, he knew there had been negotiations for my release. He didn't tell anybody, he never said it publicly but he sat me down with members of the National Executive in Lusaka. There were two easy chairs. One was taken by our Treasurer General, TT Nkobi, a very large man. The other I left for the President, Tambo. He said, "No, no, Denis you're the honoured guest, you sit in the comfortable chair," and he sat on a low stool at my knee. I mean there was to be a serious discussion about my future in our movement and there was an argument about who sits in what chair. He was again that kind of a man. People talked and they asked questions and he summed up and he said, "well, we all think Denis is in our movement, what are we going to do with him, what work should he be doing" and it ended up that I became spokesman in London for the ANC. But it was the calmness of the way in which he led the discussion. It was great for me to be received in that way, with respect, and with affection, and as a welcoming. I say that I would have followed him to the ends of the earth. But what was significant about both Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo as leaders, was their ability to find new strategies and new tactics when the old ways were no longer effective. I mentioned the Youth League and the mass mobilization. I mentioned Nelson Mandela leading the development of the armed struggle. (Oliver Tambo was

out of the country at the time.) There were others involved as well. There was always the need for new responses. On one occasion after Nelson Mandela was released I was with him at the airport going from the VIP lounge at Heathrow to his plane and people had been telling me that he seemed to be coming more and more remote and authoritarian. He'd just come back from Malaysia, where Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad was very authoritarian. I mentioned this to him as the way of opening the topic of leadership and there was me giving Nelson Mandela a lecture on leadership.

A bit cheeky, I suppose, but I have never held back when I've believed in things. He said, "Yes, he and the Prime Minister had discussed leadership and they had agreed that a leader is elected to lead and must therefore lead." And I said, "Yes, comrade, but collectively." "No I am the leader," he said. We both went round this track a few times and his companions in the car (read bodyguards), their shoulders were beginning to hunch, the hair on the back of their necks was standing up. And, I think Nelson and I agreed at the end, that the leader must lead when you have to find new ways and have to persuade others collectively to follow the new way. Since, he's not here to argue with me I am telling you that's the conclusion we came to! And that's the brilliance of these two leaders. That is in fact the way Nelson led, in practice. And so did OR

Nelson Mandela, in prison, would say to his comrades, "We cannot lead the struggle from inside the prison. You don't know enough detail, you can't communicate, you can see things very clearly because you're not overwhelmed by all the petty detail, and the petty personality clashes that occur in every movement but you have to leave the leadership to the people outside."

Nevertheless, there came a point after many years when the apartheid regime approached Nelson Mandela about release and he said "No", what we have to talk about is the conditions for the transformation of our country. He was then communicating with Oliver Tambo outside, who was also involved in negotiations but together with others and the apartheid regime. All under cover because if we do things openly too many elements get involved and have their say and you can't move forward. There was a messenger who was able to collect correspondence from Nelson Mandela to take to Oliver Tambo. This messenger read a message in which Nelson said he was talking about talks. The messenger let it be known to others, implying Nelson Mandela's capitulating, he's talking to the enemy. This created serious problems inside South Africa and O R Tambo wrote him a note to ask, "Are you negotiating? Why haven't you told us?" and Nelson wrote back to say, "We've known each other for fifty years, our friendship is so

deep, how can you doubt me? What I'm talking about is what are the conditions that have to be fulfilled so that we can have substantive talks. I will not enter into substantive talks without the leadership." It was a remarkable answer and of course the friendship was so deep between these two leaders that the problem was ironed out.

In the meantime Oliver Tambo had exhausted himself physically. He'd had one stroke after the other, he would drag his leg, left leg, when he walked. Sometimes his speech was a bit affected and then he suddenly had a tremendous stroke and was laid low. He was taken to Sweden to recuperate. Olof Palme, Prime Minister of Sweden, had been a great supporter. He had supported the ANC on humanitarian grounds.

And then Nelson Mandela was released and went to visit O R in Sweden, where he was recuperating. When he arrived it was quite remarkable because there was a queue of thousands of people waiting to greet Nelson Mandela. The television cameraman pushed his backside into your face as he walked backwards and you knew the man was coming. And suddenly he's standing in front of me, he looks at me and he says "it's a long time since we've seen each other, boy." Well, he was fifteen years older and I was the youngest so I was "boy" and, ah, it was a



Denis Goldberg with Nelson Mandela  
(photograph: Matthew Willman, courtesy of the Mandela Foundation)

nice greeting. Winnie, his wife, was next to him and she looks at me and she says "I know that face, you're quite famous at home you know," and they'd gone. And off we went to the Presidential Palace where Nelson was to stay and to meet with O R. And when they met each other after 30 years of separation you can't believe the joy. They glowed and O R who was exhausted from all the years and ill was absolutely glowing. He was up on his feet, he was talking, he was chattering and at some point round that time when he handed over the Presidency of the ANC to Nelson Mandela he said something like, "I have done my best to nurture the ANC and protect it and now hand it back, bigger and stronger than ever."

There was no sense of "It's my ANC and I'm the President." He was content to say that he had done his job now you carry on. He didn't see freedom. Chris Hani one of our great leaders was assassinated. Oliver Tambo flew from Britain to South Africa to attend the funeral. It was too much for him and he died shortly after and before liberation. And so some people call him our Moses, who led us to freedom but didn't see the promised land.

What's their legacy? Sacrifice, selflessness, a vision of humanity, a belief in human beings, a country that has a democratic constitution, a wonderful constitution. Many of its conditions we can't yet fulfil. We guarantee jobs, we guarantee enough to eat, we guarantee housing, fresh water ..... we're getting there slowly, not fast enough. We make mistakes, we have corrupt people who slow down the process. We have a terrible legacy of inequalities, we lack a trained Civil Service with integrity, we suffer from the ills of a corrupt worldwide society, we have corrupt MP's. I think you might know about that in Britain as well. I am not condoning it but I am saying that we share the problems.

You know, I say I met Nelson again and we hadn't seen each other for 26 years and yet it was as if no time had passed at all,

and as I said with Nelson and Oliver it was the same kind of thing.

Nelson Mandela was given a second concert at Wembley. We didn't know he was going to be free and suddenly he's on the stage there and he made a speech. He made a speech in praise of Oliver Tambo. A well deserved praise but there was no sense of I'm bigger than you or you're bigger than me. This was about two comrades, brothers, brothers in arms. I wish our politicians, yours and ours, could have the sense of a destiny, of freedom, that overrides the personal.

I am going to stop there to say that for me the biggest difference between living under apartheid and living in my new South Africa, our new South Africa, Madame Deputy High Commissioner, is that we have the problems, we have terrible issues to resolve but we debate them, we argue them, we protest. Sometimes our police are brutal in their suppression of it and are being criticised, by government as well, certainly by our people. We don't all end up in prison and that's because we are a democracy.

It's very nice to be part of it.

Thank you for listening to me.

## VOTE OF THANKS

by Janis Carson, Vice Principal, City of Glasgow College

Friends and colleagues, I'm sure you will agree with me that it has been an absolute privilege to hear Professor Goldberg speak this evening.

Denis's perennial optimism, integrity and love of life is an absolute inspiration.

We hope that in recording and publishing this lecture we can share this experience with a wider audience especially with our students young and old alike who can also be inspired by Denis's tremendous struggle against injustice and his commitment and passion for freedom and democracy. On behalf of everyone here and those who would have liked to be able to join us this evening, thank you so much for sharing your experiences with us.

Thanks also to the Deputy High Commissioner, Bongiwe Qwabe, for lending your support to this event both today and since the inaugural lecture back in 2006. This lecture has become an important milestone for Glasgow and continues to cement our longstanding relationship with South Africa. Our thanks are also very much due to Brian Filling, Honorary Consul to SA, Chair of ACTSA Scotland and Vice President of Community Heart. I have often heard Brian introduce himself by

saying 'I do things about South Africa' – I think 'doing things' are the imperative words here. Brian has spent many years supporting the causes of freedom, democracy and education. He continues to be a friend of City of Glasgow College promoting the aims of Community HEART with our students and without him this lecture series would not have taken place.

Thanks also to everyone else who has contributed to make this event possible, colleagues at ACTSA Scotland, Principal Paul Little for hosting and sponsoring this event, to the marketing, events and catering teams here at City of Glasgow College and not least to you, our guests, for coming along this evening, thank you all so much.



(From left to right) Bongiwe Qwabe, South African Depute High Commissioner, Paul Little, City of Glasgow College Principal, Brian Filling, Honorary Consul for South Africa, Professor Denis Goldberg, Janis Carson addressing the audience (photograph: Brian Purdie)