

THE MISTRIAL OF WINNIE MANDELA: A PROBLEM OF JUSTICE

Paul Trehwela

Find what occurred at Linz,
What huge imago made
A psychopathic god.

W H Auden, '1st September 1939'

The worst sound I ever heard was a woman screaming as she was being carried to the gallows to be hanged

It was in Pretoria Central Prison in 1966. Thank goodness I didn't see her. We were all locked up, standard procedure when they hanged people, but no-one could not hear her as we lay in our separate cells. Later we were told she was carried to the gallows strapped into a stretcher. She screamed in terror all the way. We heard her as they crossed the big hall with her, going into B Wing, where they kept the condemned men. At the end of B Wing, away from the hall, was the gallows.

It was terrible when men were hanged, always in batches, and every few weeks, but this was worse: the loneliness, that appallingly purposive public journey, the indignity, carried by men like a carpet, rolled up, almost like her own dead self in a coffin, except she was entirely alive and knew exactly what they were going to do. Her last act of humanity was this terrified protest at what was being done to her. I don't think anyone who heard that screaming can forget it. That poor woman, whatever she did, or did not do, has been dead now all this time, but her screaming is still there in the mind.¹

This memory comes back, and chills the blood, in thinking of the life and trial — now, more likely, trials — of Nomzamo Winnie Mandela, one of the first black social worker in South Africa and wife of Nelson Mandela, then a prisoner on Robben Island, about whom we sang songs in Local Prison: *Shosholozza Mandela*, and *Mandela uyeza, unamandla* — Mandela is coming, he has strength. The fixed certainties of that period are now dissolved. The rope hanging over Mandela's head in the Rivonia Trial, a matter of tenacity and defiance in 1964, transforms itself now into the abstract judicial possibility of a rope hanging over the head of his wife, then a symbol of courage and now a symbol of another kind.

Thinking of these two women, the dead woman carried screaming through the prison and the living one, the summation of this terrible intervening quarter century is that there must be an end to bloody vengeance in South Africa; but there must be equal justice. No more revenge killings, no more hanging, burning, stabbing, shooting and flogging of people, but no special exemptions either for some before the law, whether the murdering policeman and military intelligence agent

or the self-proclaimed angel of death in the People's Cause. The pain-soaked old South Africa, so much the 'new South Africa,' must be set behind. We are far from being there.

A Chronicle of Current Events

These thoughts rise to the surface with each further revelation about the crazed cycle of violence centring on Mrs Mandela's household in the late 1980s, following the defeat of the mass township revolt of 1984-86: a defeat inflicted, through hundreds of dead, by concentrated military and police violence. Given the present slaughter of scores of people every week, culminating in the massacre at Boipatong, the epic levels of homelessness and unemployment, the grim reaper of drought extending across the whole sub-continent, it might be thought that the matter of Mrs Mandela deserves merely a shrug of the shoulders, as a piece of trivia to titillate the media. That would be to mistake its emblematic importance: for an understanding of the past, and for clearing a way through the present to a more sane and humane future.

In April when fresh revelations broke over her head, the following happened: her husband announced his separation from her, she announced her resignation as head of social welfare in the ANC, she gave political direction at a house in Sharpeville where eight people had been massacred the night before, a white police captain was sentenced to hang for state-organised mass killings at Trust Feed in central Natal in 1988, and five white MPs — elected to represent the Democratic Party in the tri-cameral parliament — announced they were joining the ANC. Then, as Mrs Mandela prepared to represent the ANC on a May Day platform in Port Elizabeth, the inner city of Los Angeles exploded in a fire storm on the other side of the world, to the media comparison: Beverly Hills and LA South Central, Johannesburg and Soweto. With South Africa a universal standard of measurement by which to judge the United States, still less can the once-regarded First Lady of South Africa simply be passed over.²

She was sentenced in May last year to six years in prison for kidnapping and abducting four youths to her house in Soweto in December 1988, one of whom, Stompie Moeketsi Seipei, was later murdered. Her housekeeper, Mrs Xoliswa Falati, and her driver, Mr John Morgan, were convicted and sentenced alongside her. She was acquitted of having assaulted the youths, including Seipei, the judge accepting her alibi that she was 300 miles away at Brandfort in the Orange Free State on the day of Seipei's death (30 December). Falati and Morgan corroborated her alibi. A co-accused who had participated in the assaults, Katiza Cebekhulu, a youth of the same age as some of the victims, was not available to give evidence as he absconded early in the trial and disappeared. One of the four youths who had been kidnapped and assaulted, Gabriel Pelo Mekgwe, was also unable to give evidence because he too disappeared, after having been seen leaving a house in

Soweto in the company of ANC men. Despite her conviction and sentence, Mrs Mandela — on bail pending an appeal, apparently postponed indefinitely — was very warmly received by delegates at the ANC conference in Durban the following July. She was elected there to the National Executive Committee by a large plurality (and elected again, unopposed, this year, after resigning her welfare post, to the Transvaal Women's League of the ANC).

By the time of the July conference of the ANC last year, Cebekhulu and Mekgwe had both turned up in Zambia, effectively prisoners of the ANC. They remained in Zambia with the connivance of the one-party government of Kenneth Kaunda (then in its last months before being voted out of office in the first multi-party elections in Zambia in a quarter of a century), despite or rather because of their centrality to the judicial process concerning Mrs Mandela in Johannesburg. Cebekhulu was held in prison by the Zambian government, without trial, at the ANC's behest, even though he had broken no law in Zambia (except perhaps as a piece of luggage being conveyed over the frontier by the ANC). Mekgwe's situation was not much different. He seems to have been held prisoner in Zambia by the ANC itself, with permission of the state. The ANC has since admitted that Mekgwe (who has since returned to South Africa) was abducted to Zambia by its 'Special Projects Department', a euphemism for its loathed security department, responsible for many murders in exile. The ANC wishes people to believe that this was the error of an individual, acting without official authorisation.

As contender for government in South Africa, the ANC thus colluded with the Zambian state in the matter of Cebekhulu to thwart the judicial process in a criminal trial involving an international political celebrity. The legal process in Zambia and South Africa, as well as in Mozambique and Angola, where Cebekhulu was conveyed en route to Zambia, was systematically debauched by the ANC in its own political interest. The affair was all the more sinister as Cebekhulu was arrested and jailed in Zambia on the day after an interview with him was published in the *Zambia Daily Mail* on 14 May last year, in which he revealed how the ANC had removed him from South Africa after the beginning of the trial to protect Mrs Mandela. He later gave an interview to Zambia's *Weekly Post* from prison, in which he stated that Winnie Mandela had personally promised him 'everything — a car, a house, money and education' in exchange for his disappearance, but that these promises had not materialised. (*Independent*, 30 August 1991)

In a three-hour interview in Johannesburg on 5 October 1990, before his disappearance, Cebekhulu had told John Carlin of the London *Independent* 'he had witnessed terrible beatings that Mrs Mandela gave the four young men, Stompie in particular.' In another interview from Zambia Central Prison he said that

the truth did not come out during Mrs Mandela's trial and he would reveal everything he knows about the death of Stompie after his release. (*Star*, 28 August 1991)

Cebekhulu was not an unknown figure in the drama. Two days after inauguration of the new president, Mr Frederick Chiluba, Cebekhulu was visited on 4

November by the president himself, together with a British Conservative MP, Mrs Emma Nicholson — presumably an emissary of the the Foreign Office. Yet despite his central role as the missing co-accused in Mrs Mandela's trial and despite fruitless efforts to secure asylum for him outside of Africa, he remained incarcerated in Lusaka Central Prison. The office of the new president has stated that there are now no political prisoners in Zambia.³

In 1988 Cebekhulu had given evidence in court in South Africa (never acted on by the police or the public prosecutor) implicating Mrs Mandela in the planned murder of two young men — a charge repeated at first hand in an interview on BBC Radio Four.⁴ He has expressed his willingness to be returned to South Africa, provided his safety there could be assured. Britain and the United States are among three countries believed to have refused him asylum. A whole collection of states thus combined to pervert the course of justice in the matter of Cebekhulu, not least the South African state, under conditions of remarkable discretion (if not actual obstruction of justice) by the Conservative government in Britain.

Cebekhulu remained in limbo, imprisoned without trial in Zambia in the interest of southern African *Realpolitik*, when Mrs Mandela's alibi was blown from another direction. Her co-accused, Mrs Falati, fearing for her life at the hands of her former patron (according to her own account), and allegedly indignant that she had refused to pay the costs of her appeal, confessed to the press that she had committed perjury to shield Mrs Mandela. Mrs Mandela had in fact been at her home in Soweto at the time of Seipei's death, and had indeed assaulted him, she stated. The London *Sunday Times* reported that Falati had told ANC intelligence officers that Mrs Mandela had also initiated the murder of a Soweto doctor, Dr Abubaker Asvat, who had been brought to her house to tend to the dying Seipei. (5 April 1992) Asvat, she suggested, had been murdered as a potential witness. Falati's retraction of support for the crucial alibi was rapidly followed by that of her co-accused, Mrs Mandela's driver, John Morgan.

A substantial basis thus emerged for a retrial, with or without Cebekhulu, who had himself apparently taken part in the assault on Seipei, perhaps under duress. The *Christian Science Monitor* reported in the US that while in prison in Lusaka, Cebekhulu had told a lawyer acting on its behalf that 'Mrs Mandela ordered Dr Asvat's death because he could have given evidence of her part in Stompie's killing.' (*Guardian*, 6 April) In his statement to the South African police as quoted in the *Weekly Mail* of 15 April, Cebekhulu had directly contradicted Mrs Mandela, saying that Asvat had 'investigated Stompie' shortly after the assaults. The same paper reported that one of two men sentenced to hang for Asvat's murder — supposedly in a robbery attempt — had made a statement to police that Mrs Mandela had paid R20,000 for Asvat's murder, but that the statement had never been brought before the court. If true, this would confirm an extraordinary degree of state negligence in the prosecution of Mrs Mandela — a reluctance to proceed indicating a fixed, and probably Machiavellian, design: even complicity. (The second convicted murderer produced a contrary account.) It also became clear that Dr

Asvat was in terror in the *final two days of his life, after being visited by a new patient, Mrs Mandela's hit-man, Jerry Richardson.*

Separate Accounts

Faced with this plethora of potential witnesses, Nelson Mandela announced his separation from his wife. Under extreme pressure from the ANC, Mrs Mandela shortly afterwards announced her resignation as the ANC's head of social welfare (but not from the NEC, or other posts). According to press reports, Nelson Mandela had by this time convinced himself that his wife was enjoying a sexual relationship with a much younger man, which had continued after his release from prison. He nevertheless continued to profess not only love for his wife but also his faith in her innocence (and the venality of the media).

Here Mandela continued the cover-up organised by the ANC over a very long time. Only his own 'direct orders' from prison, transmitted through his lawyer, Ismail Ayob, had in fact secured the release of two surviving young men from Mrs Mandela's house on 16 January 1989, after Seipei's death. (*Guardian*, 18 April) As a lawyer, if not as a husband, he had been apprised for more than three years of the real state of his wife's supposed innocence on the charge of kidnapping. It then appeared that a grouping of ANC stalwarts — formed under the umbrella of the Winnie Mandela Crisis Committee, and including the secretary of the South African Council of Churches, the Rev Frank Chikane, the current ANC secretary general and trade union leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, and a nun since elected to the ANC national executive, Sister Bernard Ncube — had known all along about Mrs Mandela's doings. They too had kept silent, preferring to try to control her erratic behaviour through covert representations: to no avail. An internal ANC report — suppressed by the ANC over the following three years — showed that the Crisis Committee suspected Mrs Mandela's involvement in Seipei's death from the outset. The report, sent to the then ANC president Oliver Tambo in Lusaka, made it clear 'they had evidence Stompie had died as a result of the assaults at the Mandela house.' (*Guardian*, 18 April) Tambo and the exile leadership kept quiet.

The picture emerged of leaders of the former United Democratic Front and of the ANC in exile frantically attempting to hold together a rapidly disintegrating icon, more concerned with public perceptions of the Mandela image (and of the ANC) than the lives of Mrs Mandela's victims. This spectacle could not inspire confidence, whether in the integrity of ANC leaders or their ability to confront the nature of their organisation. Nor could there be confidence in the personal attempt by Nelson Mandela to silence a newspaper in the interest of his wife. This was the *Sowetan*, one of whose editors, Sam Mabe, was shot dead in mysterious circumstances in Soweto two years ago. It seems likely that the London *Sunday Times* was referring to Mabe when it reported Mrs Falati as saying that Winnie

Mandela had 'ordered the murders of several people, including a black journalist who was investigating her'. (5 April)

On the eve of publication of the offending revelations from Mrs Falati, Nelson Mandela personally urged the *Sowetan* to suppress the story on the spurious grounds of 'black solidarity'. It was only after the newspaper's refusal to be silenced, even by Mandela himself, and its publication of the offending article alongside the London *Sunday Times*, that he announced his separation from his wife, while continuing to proclaim her innocence.

The murky sub-text to the affair indicates that the whole past of the ANC requires accounting. Ranged alongside Mandela at his strangely public and corporative announcement of what is entirely a private affair (his personal relation to his wife) were two men at the most senior level of the ANC in exile: Tambo, who had kept quiet about Mrs Mandela, and the former secretary general, Alfred Nzo. These men had presided over the system of prison camps imposed by the ANC over its own members in practically every African country in which it had a substantial presence during the three decades of the exile. Mandela's effort to silence the press was consistent with the strangling grip of the ANC security department over public discussion of its affairs in exile, and the permanent menace directed against journalists in South Africa — especially black journalists — if they seek to publish anything unflattering to the ANC.⁵

His announcement of his separation from his wife involved once again a confusion of public and private. This was a private matter. It required no public appearance from Mr Mandela. A public repudiation of the conduct for which his wife had been convicted was, however, the minimum expected of a public figure perceived to represent a future system of impartial justice and the interests of the victims of official violence in this most brutal of societies. This was not forthcoming. The mother of Stompie Seipei could have little confidence in his judgement or resolve as the most illustrious representative of the future party of government. It is not a good omen.

Walking the Plank

Winnie Mandela had to go because she was a loose cannon on deck the ship of state.⁶ There was no saying whom she might hole next. She was personally a metaphor for an environment not suitable for business, which requires orderly, predictable conditions of public conduct and decision-making for its long term investment decisions. Who could be sure if, in the future, a delegation from the ANC leader's wife might not arrive at company headquarters or, worse still, at the private residences of the directors, with a request for a contribution to this or that deserving charity, to be supervised by Mrs Mandela herself?⁷ Or that an incautious remark at a soiree in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg might not result the next morning in a summons to an interview with the ANC Special Projects Department? The Mandela United Football

Club, and its founder/director, looked under these conditions suspiciously like the embryo of a future Praetorian Guard, with its hands on the keys (and the coffers) of the kingdom. Images of the Empress Messalina, or Poppaea, flitted across the literary memories of the more classically trained members of the foreign diplomatic corps, and also of the home grown business elite reared in classics in the South African seminaries of Bishops, Michaelhouse, Hilton and St Johns.

Despite having been inducted into the South African chapter of bodies of good works such as the Soroptimists (a lady of the year in 1986, while members of Umkhonto assaulted the police with AK-47s during the rent boycott in Alexandra), despite her panegyric to the spirit of capitalism in her introduction to a book in the same spirit by Leon Louw and Frances Kendall published in 1986/87, despite rumours of business operations planned in collaboration with various international soldiers of fortune, leading the *Sun* newspaper in Britain to comment that 'nobody is sure' where the £300,000 to build the Mandela mansion in Orlando West had come from (14 April) — despite all this, the question persisted in the minds of the great and the good: who would shake her hand, were she to stand beside a future state president of South Africa? After her conviction in the kidnapping case, with the image of the murdered Stompie Seipei in everybody's mind, no quantity of water could wash out the damned spot.

Nelson Mandela was called upon to sacrifice his wife, and thus himself, for reasons of state. He fell on his sword, the victim of his love for her. This was a fairy tale with no happy ending. The decision in 1961 of a handful of courageous individuals to embark on violent measures against the state continues to reap its harvest of pain. In this bitter end to romance, the South African past with its ogres and demons continues to lay heavy hand on the living: in the personal life, no less than in society.⁸

A metaphor for wilful political violence (by 'the oppressed', rather than 'the oppressor'), the whims of Mrs Mandela threatened to spill out of bounds beyond the mean streets of Soweto into acts of state. As a moment in transition from near-insurrectionary conditions, directed towards overthrowal of the state, to the purely bourgeois reconstruction of the state — as molten lava gells to rock — such wilful assumption of the prerogatives of state could not be allowed to continue. The state, not Comrade Nomzamo (as her husband described her in announcing their separation), or any other 'comrade', or group of comrades, is to order execution of those it deems fit to execute. Her private assumption of the public power was too public by far, and stood athwart the ABC of ordinary civil polity, in which a public rationale and an impersonal process of decision-making is required for public acts. In her personal acts she was too public, and in her public acts too personal. Her perceived administration of violence to private ends was too naked.

Such arbitrary behaviour, reminiscent of a condition of *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all), must call forth the assertion of power by that true Leviathan, the state. The call 'Amandla Ngawethu' (power is ours), on her lips and

on the lips of ANC supporters, was after all merely that, a call: a wish, a phrase. A phrase indicative of a lack of power on the part of the powerless, not its substance. No whites, and certainly no capital, suffered because of the deprivations of Mrs Mandela and her retinue, but many blacks did. In Soweto, the biggest black population centre in the country, her predation had an effect not unlike the planned result of the state-organized slaughter of township residents and commuters since 1990. It served to rob people of a rational and justified self-confidence in their own powers to create a better future for themselves, and substituted instead the enervating paralysis of waiting upon the decision of the Great Individual, or the state, or other agencies external to the people themselves. Its effect was complementary, not contrary, to the tendency of the state and also of capitalism itself, with its displacement from people to things. The personal violence of Mrs Mandela served to reinforce in the population of Soweto, and throughout the country, the principle of the actual powerlessness of black people in South Africa. It added further degradation to their subjection to the white state.

The heroic conduct of the 1960s, followed by the black consciousness thinking of the 1970s and the children's revolt of 1976 helped to develop among blacks on a very wide scale a confidence in themselves unlike anything that existed before, but the consequence of Mrs Mandela in the 1980s was shame and anger, especially in Soweto. It was deeply humiliating for the people of Soweto for her to carry out her deeds in the name of South Africa's black majority, and to be internationally lauded while enforcing a rule of silence on her doorstep.

The lesson she sought to instill was already all too well learned in this society. Don't step out of line. Don't make waves. Don't put your head above the parapet. Don't annoy the powers that be. Don't express your privately held opinions. Everything that a thinker like Biko sought to develop among blacks at the level of consciousness — in terms of personal courage, above all — was shoved down their throats, and black people were made to eat their own previous opinion of themselves. This was a phenomenon of reaction, not of revolution; of a society that had lost its way, and was blindly inflicting wounds upon itself. Mrs Mandela added humiliation to powerlessness by making the powerless celebrate and dance to her personal arrogation of their own right to represent themselves. The greater the previous sacrifice by the society, and the more dearly bought its achievements, the greater the shame. A colossal selfishness and desire for self-aggrandizement — psychological as well as in the acquisition of property — here decked itself out in the stolen clothes of concern for the welfare of the people, anger at the suffering of 'the masses', desire for retribution against 'the enemy', etc. That was the substance of Mrs Mandela's radicalism, which entranced practically all the international left and the liberal media pundits.

Forms of Religious Experience

At the time of Nelson Mandela's announcement of their separation she was: head of the department of social welfare in the ANC (in a society lacking the

most elementary provision of welfare), member of the NEC, member of the executive of the ANC's Johannesburg region and member of the executive of one of its Soweto branches. (*Independent*, 15 April) She had been placed in office as head of social welfare by her husband's decree, despite the existence of an elected incumbent. This is to say that through Mrs Mandela the members of the ANC and the people of Soweto had been politically disenfranchised in a society in which blacks had no franchise anyway. For the greatest concentration of black people in the industrial heartland of the continent to be rendered so abject politically as to have their mandate delegated to such a person is a cardinal fact of politics, both within South Africa and internationally. It states that the black population of South Africa remains far from being able to overturn the historically formed economic, social and political power structure in the country, that the ANC takes part in the present constitutional negotiations from a position of defeat, and that (with appropriate modification) most if not all the old ills will continue to flourish.

As with construction of the Lenin mausoleum in Moscow in the 1920s and all such quasi-religious acts of faith, the process by which first Nelson Mandela and then his wife were made into icons is itself an index of a substantial lack of real authority on the part of those people reposing their will in such alienated, external, distant shapes. It is bad enough when human authority is placed in a thing, a fetish. But when the process of icon-making fixes itself on a person it tends either to conceive a monster ('Stalin is the Lenin of today') or to destroy the human individual lying hidden under all that lustre (as with Presley); or both. With Mrs Mandela it is both, transformed into a monster through international adulation of the iconic lustre around her husband and herself, and also destroyed by it.

There is no comfort here for opponents of the inhuman character of the old South Africa, that the heroine of the 'new South Africa' should carry so starkly the birthmarks of the old. Looking ahead to South Africa's first all-race elections, it is not surprising that a far-sighted representative of the old regime should have stated: 'She is the National Party's biggest asset. Just imagine the election posters we can print: Vote ANC and get Winnie as a bonus'. (*Independent*, 14 April)

This cynic, an anonymous government minister, neglects to add that her misfortune was to share the features of his own brutality. It was precisely for this reason that the state — the great terrorist — permitted her a free hand to terrorise the people of Soweto, until it became expedient to call her to account. An unnamed member of the ANC executive has said privately, as reported in the *Independent*, of 14 April: 'She's a millstone round our necks. In a national election she could sink us'. He adds:

Just think how much dirt the government's intelligence services must have in their possession, waiting until the moment is politically ripe to make it public. The ANC, through its president, therefore dumped Mrs Mandela for much the same reason and with even greater calculation than the Conservative Party in Britain dumped Mrs Thatcher. It would be wrong, however, to think

that Mrs Mandela (or Mrs Thatcher) represents only herself, or that this was a purely personal crime, in some way exceptional or an aberration. When 'the movement' looks at Mrs Mandela, it reflects upon itself, as in a mirror. A whole history of fatty accumulation in the arteries brought about this attack at the heart. The murders of the Mandela United Football Club happened because for many, murder was normal; the pathological had ceased to be a matter for pathology. If primary responsibility for provoking these murders belongs to the state through its routine carnage, then it was the responsibility of 'the movement' for permitting it to happen, for not having erected stronger moral barriers to provocation. There is another, more frightening dimension. Despite the double disenfranchisement of the people of Soweto through the autocracy of Mrs Mandela, she nevertheless remains an authentic political representative of a very large — perhaps growing — constituency: the vast numbers of largely unemployed, poorly educated, hopeless youth. Excluded from access to whatever goods may be up for grabs for the developing black middle class, their rage and frustration may easily find its voice in her.

In another sense, too, these were not merely personal crimes. Especially in the Natal Midlands, where state carnage through official killers as well as hit-squads from Inkatha has lasted longest and taken the heaviest toll, it might be thought that the supposed radicalism of Mrs Mandela was the appropriate antidote to the violence of the state. She was not loathe to suggest this herself. The day after her appearance in Sharpeville after the murder of eight ANC members in a squatter camp, she appeared at Richmond in Natal, one of the greatest killing fields in the country over the previous 15 months. There she revived the old rhetoric of combat, such a dismal failure in its actual results over the past 30 years. Calling on President FW de Klerk to resign, she stated that the government's 'insincerity and dishonesty in dealing with the issue of violence' was going to have to 'force us to go back to original positions and question the whole concept of negotiations'. (*Independent*, 28 April) One does not have to dispute the insincerity and dishonesty of the de Klerk government in order to question the phrase in the mouth of Mrs Mandela. Yet it was her standpoint that was confirmed by the breakdown of negotiations, brought about principally through state intransigence and the activities of its murder machine.

The Word and the Deed

No one could say that those who have been victims of the most appalling terror, organised and protected by the state, have not the right to defend themselves, with arms, against murderers. The problem lies in the openly stalinist ethos associated with Harry Gwala, the SACP/ANC leader at the command centre of ANC combat formations responsible for assassination of Inkatha warlords and others, such as Winnington Sabelo, shot dead in his shop in Umhlanga in Natal in February. (*Weekly Mail*, 14 February) Gwala has boasted of his

role in the organisation of violence against the state-sponsored chauvinists of Inkatha. (*Independent*, 18 April) He has called for an alliance such as between Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt to 'impose peace,' presumably with himself in the role of Stalin. With considerable qualities of resolution and defiance, Gwala was a principle educator of scores of ANC members in Robben Island prison from the 1960s to the 1980s during his own 20 years of imprisonment. There he did not endear himself to members of the Pan Africanist Congress by threatening to cut off the heads of their leaders 'when the ANC came to power'. (personal communication) A former teacher, he was the mentor of the former chairman of the SACP in exile, Moses Mabhida, also a Zulu-speaker and one of a handful of top ANC officials with unrestricted access to Quatro prison camp in Angola, where critical members of the ANC were subject to the refinements of the gulag.

Natal was for many years the region of South Africa most sympathetic to the unreconstructed stalinism of Joseph Stalin himself, continuing through the 1960s and afterwards in a warm sympathy for maoism, the doctrine of people's war and the liberating air of the Great Cultural Revolution. Paradoxically, its leading theorist for many years, Rowley Arenstein, concluded his political trajectory as adviser to Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi of Inkatha, while the memory of Joseph Stalin as war-leader burned most fiercely among active service units engaged in the war of brothers against Inkatha. Still more paradoxically, the literary advocacy of this war to the knife against Inkatha in mid-Natal fell to the trotskysts of the Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT), nominally loyal to the ANC although long since expelled from it. What the MWT said through its news organ, *Inqaba yabaSebenzi*, the followers of Gwala did.

From the side of Gwala there is offered the prospect of a military conquest of Inkatha, followed by the chimera of a military conquest of the state, resulting in the installation still more metaphysically of a guerrilla regime on the model perhaps of Castro in Cuba or even Mao in China. There is not the slightest justification for a single drop of blood to fall with the aim of bringing such a regime into being, whether in one country (South Africa) or one region (mid-Natal). The political, moral and social bankruptcy of such politics is now demonstrated across continents. The armed agenda of Harry Gwala in Natal, to which the figure of Mrs Mandela in Soweto and her football club might have appeared as the crowning glory, is no alternative to the passive accommodation to the state by her husband and other leading lights in the ANC.¹⁰ In relation to Inkatha, the ideal of a guerrilla conquest of power held by Gwala and his followers serves as a self-justifying symbiosis, in which the violence of Inkatha and the violence of the comrades of the ANC is mutually self-sustaining, mutually complementary and mutually reproductive. The possibility of a more cultured society, with a more humane civic consciousness, is not compatible with the politics of kill and be killed.

This was starkly visible in the all-white referendum in March, poised between President de Klerk — supported by big capital and the National Intelligence Ser-

vice, formerly Bureau of State Security (BOSS) — and the fascist bands of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, supported constitutionally by the Conservative Party and former president PW Botha and unconstitutionally by the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) and the state structure of violence behind Inkatha.¹¹ The ANC's stand in favour of de Klerk in this referendum was proof of its own passivity, its failure to initiate a mass campaign throughout the society in favour of civil rights in order to isolate the terrorists of the right. The ANC made no substantial effort to establish the illegality of the organisers of mass murder and individual assassination, even in terms of the existing constitution, independently of de Klerk's regime. This has altered now and yet remains the same.

The long history which nurtured the psychopathology of Mrs Mandela and the triumphalism of Mr Gwala has a great deal to answer for. The alternative posed to the violence of the state has largely been a false alternative. For this reason also there can be no holding back on the need to apply to Mrs Mandela the same standard of civic justice as to anyone else. The exceptionalism of Mrs Mandela serves to justify the exceptionalism of the really great organiser of death in South Africa, the DMI. One monstrosity helps preserve and shield the other. From this standpoint, let alone the standpoint of his duty as a public representative, Mr Mandela's disclaimer in announcing separation from his wife was not enough.

Firstly, a single standard of justice throughout the society should be seen to prevail; second, a beginning must be made to bind up the nation's wounds. In the Roman republic, it was the fate of the consul Junius Brutus, as chief magistrate, to condemn his own son to the axe as if he were a stranger. There is no hiding the tragic in the conflict of the private and the public person in the lives of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, a tragedy as rich in its dimensions as in Aeschylus, or Shakespeare. Yet Roman virtue was called for, after 27 years of Roman endurance in prison, from an elderly man as human as anyone. The tragic figure of Nelson Mandela, cast in stoic posture, could provide guidance to this agonised society not by a statement of personal separation from his wife (suggesting squalid pressure from politicians in a smoke-filled room) but by a courageous public statement of the norms of civic virtue. So far this has not come to pass.

A Culture of Lies

This requires also that an end be made to the culture of lies, integral to the ANC. Over the decades of illegality, the truth was what the ANC wished or declared it to be. What was convenient was true. A standard of perceived political expediency governed the organisation, resulting in shameful silence and the still more shameful leaking of truth concerning the murder of Seipei and the reign of the football club. The ANC operated a strict moral relativism, deriving in part from the Soviet Union in the 1930s, according to which that is true today is which suits the organisation today. If the interests, or strategy, or policies of the organisation shift, then historical truth shifts also. In its toing and froing over the circumstances of the murders of Seipei and Dr Asvat, the

ANC succeeded only in further losing moral credibility it had once acquired. Habits of mind instilled over decades in exile, in the underground and in prison proved unadaptable to universal scrutiny.

Under these circumstances, the discomfort inflicted on the ANC and Mandela himself by his wife's doings might indicate, perhaps, the first stirring of a new criterion of truth in South African politics. This society cannot afford a blatant bending of the law to suit individuals. Only evil consequences can follow a failure of justice in such a matter.¹² As a minimum, Katiza Cebekhulu must be assured full safety to return to South Africa to present his evidence. If his safety requires it, he must then be given asylum abroad. (The same applies to Mekgwe). The truth about the murders of Seipei, Asvat and others must become accessible to all, in open court, and first of all to their families. There must be complete transparency concerning the past activities of the DMI, the NIS, the South African police, Inkatha, Mrs Mandela and the ANC security department in exile as well as within the country; and also a full, unexpurgated audit of the activities of 'the comrades'.¹³ Blood vengeance against the criminal must go, with an end to legalised, formal murder by the state within its prisons, as well as the flogging of prisoners in prison yards. Overhaul and reform of the whole prison system must begin immediately. Equal justice must be done, and seen to be done, with favour towards none. Such public cleaning of the stables would be the beginning of therapy in this deeply traumatised society, albeit only a beginning.

Under these circumstances, the way in which the trial of Mrs Mandela proceeds will indicate whether or not South Africa can begin to settle the ghost of the scream in Pretoria Central Prison. It is a society that desperately needs to temper the cycle described by Auden, a cycle all the more terrible because the poet's words address the generation of the Mandela United Football Club:

*I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return.*

Notes

1. Hugh Lewin has written about the same experience in his book, *Bandiet*.

2. The US film maker, Spike Lee, director of the film *Do the Right Thing* (which portrays racist police and judiciary in the US) observed after the events in Los Angeles: 'The whole world has witnessed the way blacks are treated in this country, the so-called leader of the free world. The very next day, a South African jury convicted a racist cop who was sentenced to death for having murdered blacks'. (*Guardian*, 8 May)

As events in South Africa reflect back into the US and elsewhere, the fate of Winnie Mandela in South Africa extends way beyond its boundaries.

3. Letter from Mr Vincent Malambo, Special Assistant to the President, Political and Legal Affairs, to Mr Bill McElroy, London, 16 April 1992.

4. Trehwela, Paul (1991), 'The Trial of Winnie Mandela'. *Searchlight South Africa*, No 7, July.

- 5.. This is documented in *Mau-mauling the Media: New Censorship for the New South Africa*, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1991, following a conference in Johannesburg in 1990. In an executive summary, the SAIRR states that black journalists estimate 'roughly 60 per cent of what was happening in the country did not reach the press', the result of 'an unofficial form of censorship, perpetrated by political activists, that was largely unrecognised and unreported' [p.v]. Thami Mazwai and Aggrey Klaaste of the *Sowetan* — colleagues of the journalist Sam Mabe, later shot dead in his car in Soweto — took a prominent part in the conference.
6. Through discussions in the official Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa), the ANC is deeply engaged in the process of reconstruction of the state, in the same way as defeated Boer generals were drawn into state affairs through the constitutional convention that issued in the Act of Union in 1910.
7. The ANC is reported to be 'conducting an inquiry into the disappearance of R400,000 (£80,000) from its social welfare budget.' (*Independent*, 19 April)
- 8.. Similar pressure in the working of South African political life on the most intimate of personal relationships can be found in the fiction of Gillian Slovo, whose mother, Ruth First, was blown up in Maputo by agents of South African state security in 1982. In *Ties of Blood* (Michael Joseph, 1989), as in the film *A World Apart*, it is the strained relation of daughter to mother that comes most vividly to life, not the rendering of South African social and political conditions. In the breakdown between the public and the personal life, there were many emotional orphans created in the past 30 years. Scorched marriages, scarred children were a commonplace of 'the struggle'. The therapeutic need apparent in a work like *Ties of Blood* — a kind of exorcism, or catharsis — goes way beyond its author alone. The whole society stands in need of emotional therapy, in which buried pain may rise to consciousness, become visible, and so be dealt with openly. This is so for the tens of thousands of victims of torture and brutality first of all.
- 9.. What do schools in the US do with a book like *Winnie Mandela: The Soul of South Africa*, written by Michael Meltzer and published for children by Viking Kestrel in 1986, in its series 'Women of Our Time'? Do they now remove it surreptitiously from their shelves? But is this 'politically correct'? It would be worth reflecting on the soul of Mr Meltzer.
10. In 1988, in her heyday, Mrs Mandela appeared as guest speaker at the ML Sultan Technikon in Durban to launch a biography of her husband written by Professor Fatima Meer of the University of Natal. While she was speaking, members of her football club exhibited their skills by beating up students protesting at the autocratic tenor of Professor Meer. (The journalist and academic RW Johnson was present, and reported the incident). A leader of the UDF and personal friend of the Mandela family, Mrs Meer played a major part in November 1988 in opposing the proposed — and aborted — visit to South Africa of Salman Rushdie to speak on censorship. (*Searchlight South Africa*, No 3, July 1989) In February 1990 she hosted the media presentation on one of the British television channels of the release of Nelson Mandela.
11. The *eminence grise* of the NIS, its former chief, Dr Niel Barnard, has given interviews leading to a series of articles in the South African press which reveal long-term planning and preparation by the NIS for the release of Nelson Mandela. (*Star*, 26 February 1992) The NIS went into eclipse at the end of the 1970s when the regime of PW Botha, representing the military terror of the DMI, replaced the police regime of BJ Vorster, representing the NIS (or BOSS). The atrocities of the DMI were reported in Trewhela, 'Within the Secret State: The Directorate of Military Intelligence', *Searchlight South Africa*, No 8 (January 1992). At the time of writing I was not aware that shortly after taking office as state president in 1989, de Klerk disbanded the State Security Council through which the DMI had controlled cabinet business (and the whole country) and replaced it with a new security structure, headed by the NIS. This is analysed by Laurie Nathan and Mark Phillips, 'Security Reforms. The Pen and the Sword', *Indicator SA*, Vol 8, No 4 (Spring 1991), and in *SouthScan*, Vol 6, No 40 (25 October 1991). Barnard's relations with his former master, Botha, who appointed him to head the NIS, have descended into acrimony. The secret history of the state in South Africa is one of wrangling for supremacy by these murderous bureaucratic saurians, much as in the former Soviet Union. Like its prototype, the KGB, which supported Andropov and Gorbachev, the NIS backed 'reform' — the DMI, reaction. This major change in structure and in orientation within the state prepared conditions for prosecution of individual DMI and police operatives responsible for massacres.

12. Chinua Achebe has written of the evil consequences of the 'failure of the state to fulfil its primary obligation to its citizens,' at the time of the killing of Igbo civilians in northern Nigeria in 1966 (the federal government sat by and let it happen). The result was the attempted secession of Eastern Nigeria, and a war costing two million lives. In warning words for southern Africa, Achebe says he finds it 'difficult to forgive Nigeria and my countrymen and women for the political nonchalance and cruelty that unleashed upon us these terrible events which set us back a whole generation...' ('Words of Anxious Love,' *Guardian*, 7 May)
13. As recently as January, there was a report that two members of the ANC security department (known as 'Ricky' and 'Mao') had approached a member of the fascist AWB who was also a former member of Special Forces — a sub-department of the DMI — to carry out a 'hit' on a former senior Umkhonto commander who had been captured and 'turned' by the regime in the mid-1980s. The ANC admitted that Patrick Lekota, their new head of intelligence, had paid the AWB man R12,000 for information regarding alleged weapons purchases by the far right. It was alleged that this man had been offered a further R50,000 (£10,000) to carry out the assassination, which did not take place. (*Independent*, 18 January) It would be interesting to know where the ANC obtains the money for this kind of dealing.

Sources

Britain: *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Sun*, *Sunday Times*. South Africa: *Indicator*, *SouthScan*, *Star*, *Weekly Mail*.

April-June 1992

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