THE DOGS OF WAR

The Mother of All Trials

The trial of Winnie Mandela came mercifully to an end in mid–May. The events recounted in the High Court could only embarrass every person concerned for the fate of the people of South Africa. The lies that were blatantly told to cover up a horrible crime, taken together with the slandering of a priest in order to escape the penalty of the court, could only do harm to all those involved in the struggle to transform that miserable society.

In the end Mrs Mandela was found guilty by the court of being an accessory to the kidnapping and assault of four youths, one of whom was subsequently murdered. It was also said that she was involved in previous events which led to the death of youths at the hands of the gang that was named the Mandela Football Club. That evidence was withdrawn at her trial for legal reasons. But those crimes will not go away and she will always stand accused, even if she was not formally charged or tried.

Her defenders now claim, correctly, that she was tried in a court in which whites predominate. This is the nature of South Africa. Nonetheless, are we to believe that a black judge, faced with the evidence that was laid before the court, and the evidence that was concealed by the abduction of witnesses, would have handed down a different judgment? Before rushing to answer, will her supporters explain how it was that her husband, Nelson Mandela, called for her to be tried so that she could prove her innocence? He knew, as we all do, that the case, if tried, would be before a white judge, with a white prosecutor. He knew that in such a case, a white defence advocate would be called. And if on appeal Mrs Mandela is freed (by white judges), will that change the nature of justice in South Africa? Because if the die is still cast against the accused, why demand an appeal? Or perhaps it is all counterfeit, all an attempt to keep Mrs Mandela out of prison until an ANC government is in place and this woman can go free without the need for a judicial review.

If that is the plan then the future of the country looks even grimmer than we had thought.

For Mrs Mandela we can have little respect, even if she does continue to seek the limelight through her protests. Such activities will no doubt earn her the support of people everywhere who are impatient at the pace of change, but that cannot erase the fact that she has shown callous disregard for the men, women and young people caught in the web of violence that surrounded her. The fight against the authorities, essential as it is, must go hand in hand with democratic control inside the ranks of those who stand against oppression.

Our knowledge of her activities and her brand of politics has been formed after decades in which her views have been recorded in the media that she loved to exploit until it subjected her to criticism. Her personal behaviour over decades has led to murmurings inside the communities in which she

operated; her political utterances have been a cause for concern to her political allies; her endorsement of dubious political tracts (see *Searchlight South Africa*, No) have been the despair of the Congress movement; her connivance with commercial enterprises had to be vetoed to prevent political embarrassment to her husband and the African National Congress. She has known no discipline and has not been bound by the views of those with whom she claimed to work.

Now she stands condemned, and although the final legal outcome awaits an appeal there are few who are so blind as to say that she has done no wrong.

Nonetheless, it is not possible to endorse the prison sentence that was handed down. Those who have seen those miserable prisons in South Africa from the inside or experienced the regime under which they are controlled cannot wish such treatment on the most miserable of human beings. Those institutions should be closed forthwith and people spared the ignominy of such confinement. That is not to say that better prisons should be built. Even if the system were reformed we would still wish to see them closed. Prisons never served any other purpose but to degrade and dehumanize and have no place in the society that must be rebuilt from the bottom upward.

What Mrs Mandela requires is not a prison sentence, but sympathy and understanding for what she has endured as a victim of apartheid, and as a person cut off from her husband and family. With this she also needs counselling to allow her to understand that what she has done is unacceptable. It is this that she finally has to confront. She has to learn that what happened at her home is unacceptable, and that the families of the victims of the Mandela Football Club need her remorse. She has to realise that her guilt demands expiation – whether she was directly or indirectly involved, or whether she only provided the premises on which such deeds could be executed.

If it was only the matter of this one person, irrespective of her status, there would be little more to say. However, Mrs Mandela is not only the wife of Nelson Mandela, who might still hold high office, but also a leading member of the ANC, appointed to control a sensitive region in charge of Social Welfare, and a leader of the Transvaal Woman's League. That makes the crime even more serious and raises doubts about her fitness to occupy office in any political movement. It also demands of the political movements that they delve more deeply into what has been happening in the townships over the past few years and indeed over several generations.

The Curse of Apartheid

Winnie Mandela was born into and has lived all her life in an oppressive system that determined every aspect of her existence. She was discriminated against from the moment of her birth and could never escape the system that determined her upbringing, place of residence, schooling and also her social, political and economic life.

What can be said about her can be repeated for every black person in South Africa. Each one has been blighted by the curse of apartheid, harmed or stunted by a system that was designed to impress on them their inferiority. And they were not alone. The whites were mentally (if not physically) blighted, although in their case it was by an assumed superiority that had no foundation in fact. The skin colour (or the shape of face, texture of hair, or even the expressions they uttered) determined the entire life style of millions of people. Even entry into the petty bourgeoisie, through professional training or trade, did not protect black people or families, even though it eased their life style. The Mandelas, and in particular Winnie Mandela, could only feel more resentful because the status they had acquired gave little relief from the daily irritations of the tightly controlled apartheid system.

Furthermore, Mrs Mandela was the wife of a man who was sent to prison, and kept under the most oppressive conditions for 27 years. This made Mrs Mandela an innocent victim of vicious laws, denied a stable life and harassed by a state that knew no compassion. In her own way she became a redoubtable symbol of resistance. But the defiance she displayed came only at the expense of an inner strain that eroded her sense of values. And the adulation she earned from some sections of the community did not make it any easier for her to come to grips with the personal burden of her loneliness.

It is conceivable that a psychiatrist might provide some relief for a person under such conditions. But even if that were possible, Mrs Mandela is only one among millions whose life has been blighted by the crime of apartheid. Individuals might get support and help from therapists, but it is an entire nation that has been profoundly affected by the conditions under which it was forced to live. Irrespective of what changes are forged in South Africa, it will be a hard struggle to escape from under the shadow of a life–time of degradation.

The problems that face South Africa in the future are vast. We do not refer to the expectations of improvement in every sphere of life, or the alleviation of poverty; nor to the provision of jobs, land, or better living conditions. That cannot be provided for years to come. Within the population there will be tens of thousands of men and women whose entire personalities have been warped by the conditions under which they have subsisted.

Without wishing to force an analogy, there must be grave concern that many South Africans have undergone an ordeal not unlike the experience of ethnic minorities in Europe during the last war. After the experience of the concentration camps, those who survived physically had the greatest difficulty in adjusting to the post–war world. The same must be expected of large numbers of people who will emerge one day from the ghettoes of South Africa.

And now, the Comtsotsis

In open letter of 5 April to President de Klerk, Mr Mandela called upon the government to stop the violence in the country. He put forward a long list of

demands, all of which he expected the (white) government of Mr de Klerk to operate. The demands included the ending of township violence; the outlawing of weapons, traditional or otherwise; sacking of Adrian Vlok (Minister of Police) and Magnus Malan (Defence); rustication of all officers of the Defence Force responsible for setting up or management of the hit squads; dismantling and disarming of special counter insurgency units (Askaris, Koevoet, etc) to be overseen by a multiparty commission. He demanded the immediate suspension of all police implicated in the massacres of Sebokeng on 22 March 1990, and those involved in the Daveyton shooting of 24 March 1991, with legal proceedings in Sebokeng and a Commission of Inquiry into the Daveyton episodes. There were also demands for the phasing out of hostels and labour compounds; the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry into complaints of misconduct by police and security services, etc. All this was to be acceeded by 9 May or else the talks between the ANC and the government would end.

On 15 May 1991, six days after the deadline had expired, Mr Mandela addressed a gathering called to protest the killing of 27 persons by an Inkatha mob and accused F W de Klerk (the 'man of integrity' as he had once called him), and his administration, of having no concern for the lives of Africans. In this he was correct. The record of recent times bears testimony to the inhumanity of the authorities. Mr Mandela was referring to political protests, and to this could be added the lack of provisions for social welfare, the miserly provision of pensions, the absence of maternity grants, the deaths due to malnutrition, the failure to deal with Aids, and so on. For the authorities the old racist adage holds: 'the only good kaffir is a dead kaffir'.

However what Mr Mandela said skirts much of the present problem. The killings are being perpetrated mainly by blacks, whether they carry 'traditional weapons' or not. They are the work not only of Inkatha but also of gangs who claim to belong to the ANC, to the PAC, to Azapo and, of course, to Inkatha. Add to this the large criminal sector of the townships who have a contemptuous disregard for the lives of people in the townships – in the squatter camps, in the hostels, and in the streets.

Aping their masters, the gangs that have formed in every district prey on the people. For weapons they use any implement available, 'traditional' or otherwise. They are merciless and destructive, and are known to have kept entire families inside houses they have burnt down. The grief inflicted on innocent families is indescribable; the weekly toll is horrendous.

Official figures of crime in 1990 put reported murder cases at 15,000 (a 28% increase on 1989). In graphic terms the *Weekly Mail*, (25 January 1991) said: 'a serious assautd occurs every four minutes; car theft every nine minutes; robbery every ten minutes; break–ins every three minutes; a rape every 26 minutes and a murder every 45 minutes.' Startling as these facts are, the so called 'unrest–related crime' rose by 49.9% over the year and illegal possession of arms was up by 44.7%. These figures do not reveal a new trend, even if they grow larger by the year. Every decade, over the past century, new layers of lumpen have been thrown up, who have preyed on their township neighbours. Every decade has seen a refinement in the methods they have used,

but ultimately it has always meant the same: the killing, the crippling, the maiming or the destruction of the personality through the cruellest of assaults.

The older generation is still haunted by the memory of those gangs: the Ninevites who preyed on the gold miners and robbed them of their pittance at the turn of the century; the amalaita gangs who came out at night to terrorise whole districts in the towns; the Msomi gang of Alexandra Township who deserve special mention because some of their members became leaders of the local ANC branch; the 'Russians', the blanketed Sotho predators who terrorised Sophiatown and adjacent regions; the tsotsis, the thugs who took their name from the stovepipe trousers they wore as a uniform; and now the 'Comrades' turned gangster and appropriately named 'Comtsotsis'.

Sporting names taken from B–grade films, these gangs were the scourge of the townships. Stories about their life of crime, particularly from the Transvaal, have appeared in autobiographies and in stories, in journals and newspapers but a full account is still needed.[1] Besides these texts the information available is anecdotal. Doctors stationed at the Baragwanath Hospital in the 1950s and 1960s spoke with concern of the paraplegics whose injury was the consequence of a mugging in which a sharpened spoke of a bicycle wheel was plunged into the victim's spine with surgical precision. Their colleagues in casualty described the stream of maulings and injuries over the weekend, leaving persons maimed for life. Women reported that they were abused or even raped while standing in the packed commuter trains on their way to the urban centre. Young township girls were abducted by gangsters and forced to consort with them.

The tales could be repeated for every African ghetto, and also for the Coloured townships. The centre of Coloured crime was in the western Cape, and particularly Cape Town. Similar conditions of unemployment, overcrowding, social deprivation, inadequate provisions for education and so on gave parts of dockland the highest crime rate in the country.

Cry Havoc!

History has its tales to recount but it is the current situation that concerns us here. In discussing what is happening, it must be stressed that statistics, so important in detailing the extent of what is happening, do not indicate the misery of even one killing. It is the terror that strikes at families and reduces them to pulp that must be appreciated, and the calibre of those that carry out these grim deeds that need exploring. What emerges from the stories that have been gathered by newspaper reporters shows that they include Inkatha supporters; gangs that rally around the political movements; vigilantes who emerged from the nationalist movements to side with the authorities; and now the 'Comtsotsis'.

The 'Comrades' were notorious for their use of the 'necklace' – the motor car tyre filled with petrol – with which people were burnt alive. The necklaces were used against people accused of collaboration with the government, against political opponents and against persons for whom the com-

rades bore some grudge. It was these instruments of inquisition that Mrs Mandela praised for the freedom they would bring.

After having themselves imposed boycotts of shops, the comrades also forced women who broke the boycott to consume the products found in their possession, including soap powder, paraffin, oil or other non–consumables. Other stories of their exploits are even more sickening. There were accounts of their cutting off of ears and forcing their victims to eat the organ, and rape was not uncommon.

Gangsterism and political action went hand–in–hand in the heady days of 1984–86. This was acclaimed by many who once espoused liberal values but saw in these acts just retribution for the inequities of apartheid. It is in this atmosphere that the Mandela Football Club came into existence and was accepted by many Congress followers as a symbol of resistance to the regime and a bodyguard for the Mandela household. The 'Club' emerged from the lumpen youth who otherwise terrorised the township. It was part of the lawlessness and it reflected that violence. Once formed, and shielded behind the Mandela name, it helped orchestrate the terror in the environs. In like fashion, Winnie Mandela reflected the chaos in Soweto and helped reinforce it through her words and her actions. Yet, when the evidence could no longer be denied, the stories about this gang of hooligans, of abductions, beatings, and inevitably rape, were discounted. The anger of the those who protested was silenced or dismissed as government propaganda; the populist media stayed silent; and leaders of the Mass Democratic Movement joined the conspiracy of silence until they could tolerate these activities no longer, and denounced Mrs Mandela. Then, when they dared to speak out, they were removed from their former positions of leadership and forced out of political activity.

What happened in Soweto has been spotlighted by this notorious gang. Yet it was only one instant of a phenomenon that spread across the country, even if at first it seemed to observers to reflect only militant defiance of the authorities. It had to appear in that form because the police, the army and also the local civic authority are clearly seen to represent the main enemy. The police reciprocated by declaring these youth groups as public enemy number one. Anti–authority, and dare–devil to boot, it was all too easy to view them all through rose–tinted glasses. They could not be distinguished by the outside observer and their clashes with the police always placed them in the best of light.

It is not always easy to uncover the stories behind the gangs. What did become obvious was that their members were mainly without schooling, or had a rudimentary literacy. This did not prevent the most remarkable attributes being ascribed to them. Proud acolytes told of little Stompie Moeketsi Seipei, then 11 or 12 years old, being able to recite verbatim the complete contents of the first volume of Marx's *Capital*. If that were even vaguely possible, the reader might only sigh and wonder why that should be thought to add anything to the boy's prowess. Other youths took as their *nom de guerre* names of persons about whom they knew little (like Ghadafi or

Castro), except that they were known to have been disliked by the government. To these young men (many prepubescent) were ascribed wondrous sayings and braver deeds. They were the gadflies of the armed forces, but many of them fed in the swamps of the criminal world. Some played a dual role: as 'freedom fighters' and as police informers. Living as bandits (in the best and worst senses of the word) they took food, liquor and drugs where they could. And these, let us remind ourselves, were not yet (or were perhaps barely) teenagers. They were, as most teenage gangs tend to be, mainly boys. But there were also gangs of girls, every bit as cruel and predatory as their male counterparts.

To get a picture of what has been happening on the ground we turned to accounts in the *Weekly Mail*. We quote almost at random:

On 8–14 February 1991, Eddie Koch and Sarah Blecher wrote on the Comtsotsis waging a bloody war against ANC activists across the country. At Bekkersdal near Randfontein bitter sectarian strife between the ANC and Azapo escalated when local gangs entered the fray. In Sebokeng near Vereeniging, former 'comrades' formed themselves into criminal gangs. At Shatale in Lebowa in the eastern Transvaal, dissident 'comrades' plotted to kill the chairman of the pro–civic organization. At Komga in the eastern Cape, PAC and ANC factions fought and left many casualties. They continued:

> It is the renaissance of a familiar township scourge, organized gangs of unemployed township youths, that runs like a thread through each of the trouble spots. These were the shock–troops of the struggle in 1984–86, who conducted a 'people's war' and 'made the townships ungovernable'. Their excesses at the time were at best overlooked and at worst condoned.

The article gave further details. It was these gangs that burned houses at random, stole door frames, windows and geysers; sliced off ears forcing people to eat them; raped girls; stopped people reporting to the police; forced shebeen owners to give them free liquor; forced shop owners to give them free food; hijacked taxis, collected protection fees from householders. After the unbanning of political movements these tsotsis resisted discipline and began organizing themselves as gangs.

When the ANC tried to discipline them in Shatale they claimed to belong to the PAC or to Azapo; they armed themselves with pangas, garden forks, spades, axes, etc, to attack the chairman of the civic association. They burnt down shops, they stole liquor, they attacked taxi drivers and burnt their cars, etc.

In Bekkersdal, wrote Phillipa Garson, the struggle started when the ANC tried to organize in an area that was an Azapo/PAC stronghold. It ended as little more than an anarchic mess.. The gangs have intervened to their own benefit; schools have been disrupted and forced to close. Unemployed miners have joined in the fighting, donning ANC T–shirts but politically ignorant.

In the *Weekly Mail* of 18–24 January 1991, Wally Mbhele told a gory story of a shoot up in Sebokeng between ANC 'comrades' and a gang which then allied itself with Inkatha. Thereafter, the ANC activist Christopher Mphikeleli Nangalembe was abducted and killed. The wake for the dead man was raided by the gang. Using AK–47 rifles and grenades 39 mourners were killed and many injured – 26 requiring hospitalisation and others still requiring treatment. Later that day 'comrades' went on the rampage in Sebokeng, razing houses where gangsters were said to be living.

So the stories go on and on...

In the issue of 15–21 February 1991 of the *Weekly Mail*, Koch and Blecher reported from Tornado (otherwise known as Modderspruit in Bophuthatswana). It appears that a local ANC branch member, Varo Mashabella, was murdered in January when caught trying to rob the house of a prominent taximan in the nearby community of Bapong. Mashabella was given an official ANC funeral and then rival (youth) factions in the ANC swopped allegations accusing each other of having caused the death. Two youth gangs, each acting in the name of the ANC, threatened civil war. Each group mobilised armed youth and the township was at the edge of war. Only intervention from the ANC regional office averted bloodshed.

Precisely where politics stopped and gangsterism (on all sides) took over is not always certain. But the case of the explosion in Alexandra Township leading to the death of at least 61 people, as reported by Gavin Evans in the *Weekly Mail* of 15–21 March 1991, seems clear. This one incident has all the ingredients of the violence that has scarred the townships.

Evans ascribed the event to the greed and fears of a government–backed black Council, Inkatha aggression, ANC indiscipline and police bias. This story started when the township mayor, 'Prince' Mokoena, arranged with developers to build houses on a tract of land on the township's far East Bank. The Alexandra Civic Organization (led by Moses Mayekiso) met with the Transvaal Provincial Administration and had the five–person, unelected township Council scrapped. The area was placed under the more trusted (all white) Sandton town council.

Several councillors had been threatened in the preceding period and, earlier in the month, community members had marched to Mokoena's house and dumped rubbish on his property. There was no doubt about the antagonism shown by large sections of the community against the Council and Mokoena in particular. In a provocative move Mokoena threatened that there would be trouble and announced that he had joined Inkatha. He went into hiding shortly thereafter.

Meanwhile forces were being positioned inside Alexandra Township. The old Joint Management Committee – an arm of the National Management System, set up by former President Botha[2] although disbanded by de Klerk, was in operation in Alexandra, under a different name but with the same personnel. They were supporters of the Councillors and believed to be behind the vigilante attacks on members of the ANC over recent years.

Inkatha was also recruiting aggressively in the hostels, whipping up resentment and preparing for the coming events.

At this stage ANC supporters recklessly necklaced an Inkatha member Ntlanhla Nzuza, and were searching for another member when the violence erupted. ANC supporters did not condemn the necklacing but claimed it was in revenge for the murder of several ANC supporters in the hostel earlier that evening. In the rioting that followed the police were accused by the ANC of playing a blatantly biased role, disarming and shooting their members while refusing to disarm Inkatha.

The Politics of Confrontation

As the mayhem in the townships increased, the editors of the *Weekly Mail* wrote an open letter to President F W de Klerk. (5–11 April 1991) In it they said

> We see a strange hand that is turning local conflicts, even family feuds, into massive conflicts between rival political organizations, using professional, highly–trained and well armed hit squads.
> We see one obvious source for this activity: the vast teams of people your predecessors in the government trained and used to wreak covert havoc and destruction among National Party opponents.

Saying that they do not know who or where they are, the editors continued:

> We do know, however, that they still exist somewhere and they are not the sort of people to retire gratefully.
> We also know that they have been sheltered from public scrutiny or accountability and are therefore free to continue their destructive work, with or without official sanction.
> We know there was a vast sub–continental network of such people who operated through Renamo, through Zipra dissidents, through the Askaris [captured MK guerrillas who became assassins for the state], through military intelligence, through security police, through the CCB and through countless other fronts that have not been exposed.
> We know these people were capable of bombing. poisoning,shooting, kidnapping and sabotaging at home and in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Angola, Zambia and even France and England.
> We know that inside the country, they did similar work with even greater impunity: killing, burning and bombing. When the work got even too distasteful for them, they used vigilantes who set fire to whole squatter camps because they had become strongholds for your opponents...

By pointing a finger at the security services, the paper expressed the obvious. What has to be determined is what lies behind the manoeuvres of the recent period

Power is, Where Power Lies

Negotiations between Congress and the government began well before the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990. While still inside prison Mr Mandela was already a celebrity and a 'diplomat', meeting with leaders of the Mass Democratic Movement, his legal advisers and church leaders. While still a prisoner, he saw President P W Botha at his own request and obviously prepared the way for talks that would be convened publicly, even if conducted privately. Simultaneously, in a set of discussions in Zambia, West Africa and elsewhere, financiers, business leaders and academics met with the external wing of the ANC.

The talks were conducted more openly after Mr Mandela's release. The conditions in the country were such that the government could not continue without signalling overtly to the outside world that it was prepared to talk to the Congress leaders, and the ANC, confronted by the defeat of the revolt of 1984–86 and its inability to mount a military campaign inside the country, could not establish a base for itself inside the country without entering into talks with the government. Conditions were also more propitious for the talks to commence. The whole process had been made possible by the withdrawal of the USSR (and its satellites) from Southern Africa. With the government assured that the 'Soviet threat' was removed, and that the Cuban troops would be withdrawn from Angola, thus stripping the ANC/SACP of its Soviet backing, talks about talks could proceed.

These were obviously not idle talks. The aim, it was proclaimed from all sides, was about change. But it was to be change inside the existing social and economic structures. Nonetheless, change meant that there would have to be agreement on a new government – and this too was to be a controlled change that kept the old structures intact, with modifications to meet the aspirations of some of the communities. Cynicism within the political movement (as expressed in the 'Letter from Johannesburg' in this issue) is a reflection of the acceptance of this new reality, even by many of those who had once spoken in bolder terms of socialism, of nationalization, and of an equalizing of wealth.

From the beginning it was apparent that there were more than two players, even if the members of the ANC/SACP alliance tried to close their eyes to the obvious. Besides the government and the ANC there were several other contending parties. Among the whites there were the right–wing parties who could even, under certain conditions, gain majority support in the white electorate. Among the Africans there were the Mass Democratic Movement (that had not been fully integrated into the ANC) and several splinter groups (who could always prove an embarrassment). There were also the Homeland leaders, including KwaZulu with its prime minister and political leader, Gatsha Buthelezi.

A twin process was at work, some of it having commenced before the possibility of talks had been raised openly, preparing the way for new alignments. Some of the previously liberal whites found shelter in the ruling National Party (and gave it moral support), while the National Party also

opened its ranks (at least as a gesture) to all ethnic groups. This prepared the way for the government to attract the support of sizable sections of the Coloured people – starting with members of the Labour Party who control the Assembly currently set aside the Coloureds – and the Indians. Whether such groups will enter the ruling National party in large number might be open to doubt, but it will certainly allow for electoral alliances. The Nationalists also sought an alliance with (if not absorbtion of) large African communities that adhered to independent religious denominations. The jokers in the pack were the Homeland's leaders. They were possible factors in the talking phase, and even more importantly, had the means to manipulate a large portion of an electorate that might be called upon to elect a Constituent Assembly or a Parliament, and could play a determining role in 'round table talks'. In this game of political placement there can be no doubt that the government of President de Klerk had all the odds staked on its side: it was more astute than the opposition, better endowed financially, and in the final analysis it controlled the army and the poice force.

Ignoring the reality of power and the wiles of the government, the ANC presented a different perspective. Or at least two different perspectives. On the one hand stood Mrs Mandela who is quoted as saying at Bekkersdal in February (in both English and Xhosa), that 'Your spears should be pointed in the direction of Pretoria. Our enemy is in Pretoria. We have never had enemies within ourselves. We are all here because of our fight for freedom. The enemy come here to exploit our differences'. (See the accompanying article on the trial of Mrs Mandela by Paul Trewhela). As if orchestrated, Chris Hani, Mrs Mandela's closest supporter in the kidnapping trial, also speaking at Bekkersdal proclaimed:

> We are all black people who are oppressed. We are not oppressed by other black people. Who is the enemy? The whites from Pretoria and Cape Town are the enemy of the black people...you have nothing whatsoever but you are fighting yourselves. Did we go to Robben Island for years so we could kill each other?

He also said that the time was right 'to take power from the whiteman'. Not to be outdone, Lybon Mabasa national project co–ordinator of Azapo, repeated the theme, saying: 'Your knives are misdirected if aimed at (our organization). Your knives should be aimed at Pretoria...If we waste our energy on each other when the real enemy confronts us we will have no strength. (Weekly Mail; 8–14 Feb 1991) Any comment on the crude appeal to race would be superfluous.

Mr Mandela preferred to direct attention elsewhere in a television interview conducted by Donald Woods in mid–April. Then he said, addressing the BBC's audiance, that the ANC was 'not a party but a government in waiting'. This might indeed be the way in which he views forthcoming events. He might genuinely believe that all that is required is the abdication of the National Party and the taking of office, with all its appurtenances, by the ANC.

To achieve Mr Mandela's aim, the ANC sought first to absorb the opposition bodies. Cosatu, was co–opted onto the ANC machine with the assistance of trade union officials. The Pan Africanist Congress leaders, after three decades of antagonism in which they threatened as violently as Inkatha, but proved incapable of action, met with and declared their allegiance to Mr Mandela's machine. The Mass Democratic Movement (or its predecessor, the United Democratic Front) proved to be more difficult, and although it disbanded in favour of the ANC there were many who wanted to retain the movement they had constructed with strong grass–root support. The one–time street and area committees, that had campaigned against rent increases, Urban Bantu Councils, and a host of repressive measures, despairing now of the ANC's preoccupation with talks at the expense of local campaigning, could be revived to give new direction to a struggle that lies dampened at present. In fact it is this very possibility that could force the hands of both government and ANC and make them revive the faltering talks.

The position in the Homelands is less certain and must surely depend on who holds the strings of power in those blighted areas, and where they see their interests best represented. Several of their leaders opted for collaboration with the ANC, but the reliability of these men must remain in doubt. Despite their real poverty of resources, they control a police force and an army and, provided they can keep these forces under their control, they act as possible foci of parochial self interest. That makes them men who can swing their favours where it suits them best. Their support for the ANC can be chalked up as a victory for the Mandela team, but it remains a hollow victory in the absence of an alliance with the two largest population groups, that of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu. In the course of changing alliances there were coups in the Transkei, Ciskei and elsewhere. In these cases the government could not or did not prevent the deposition of the existing governments. In Bophutatswana the stakes were too high and the government was ready. Troops were dispatched to save President Mangope and the rebels routed. In KwaZulu there was no problem. Buthelezi has the reigns of power firmly in his hands and he means to maintain that position.

The stage is therefore set for hard bargaining, and whether the ANC threatens to resume an armed struggle that it cannot mobilise, or break off talks, it has no other option but to resume negotiations. Except that after each break it is shown to be less capable than ever of presenting a real threat. The militant stance (of April/May 1991) is more likely to impress the delegates at the forthcoming ANC conference in July than signal a new course. The ANC leaders and the National Party administration need each other to survive and will find their way back to informal and formal talks. Like the famous Duke of York, Mr Mandela will march his men to the top of the hill, in order to march them down again.

The harsh reality of the current situation demands a radical rethink. It needs little imagination to see where campaigns must be mounted, whether in the workplace, the community centres, the schools or the land. There are pressing needs now for more employment, for better working conditions, for

higher wages. The continuation of a ghettos for different race groups can no longer be sustained; the slums that are called townships must be eradicated and proper housing substituted; meanwhile economic transport must be laid on for people still forced to live in those shacklands. Schools must be fully integrated and provisions made for remedial teaching for the disadvantaged.

There must be immediate action to return those people removed from the rural 'black spots' in the name of apartheid, and their rehabilitation as living communities. They need houses, water, seed and implements to compensate them for the wrongs of forced removal. The larger land question also needs redress but that needs careful planning and must wait until plans are drawn up. But the issue cannot be wished away and needs urgent attention from those that claim that they stand for meaningful change.

None of these problems are open to instant solution. Nobody can claim that the answers are readily available, but these are matters that demand a solution. The alternative is to pass the initiative to big business and lead the people into decades of new servitude.

There has to be active campaigning, not to keep the talks on track, but to gain basic changes in the lives of the million of people whose situation has grown desperate. Yet this seems to be beyond the capabilities of the ANC, or indeed any of the other political movements.

And yet, these are the people who talk about 'being the government in waiting'. Indeed, 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika!'

Footnotes

1. Accounts of gang life appeared in **Drum**, in the **Bantu World**, and in **Golden City Post** in the 1950s. An account of the 'Russians' and of other township violence can be found in Trevor Huddlestone, **Naught For Thy Comfort** (various editions); Michael Scott tells of violence in the Shantytown squatter camp in **A Time To Speak**, Faber, 1958; Bloke Modisane has an account of a brutal killing in **Blame Me on History**, Thames and Hudson, 1963. Charles van Onselen, **A Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand**, Vol 1 (1980), tells the story of the Ninevites and the amalaitas. See also Paul la Hausse, in numerous articles and in his M A thesis, for the social background of the 'amalaitas' who were by no means all involved in crime. See also Don Mattera, **Gone With the Twilight**, for an insider's story of Sophiatown gangland.

2. See **Searchlight South Africa**, No 2, for an examination of the role of the JMC.

ZULU MANHOOD?

Tragedy became farce, and farce became tragedy on Sunday 27 May when Inkatha staged a show of strength at the Soweto Soccer City stadium. Despite the ban on 'traditional weapons', 40,000 heavily armed men gathered to hear King Goodwill Zwelithini, dressed as a Zulu warrior in leopard skin and carrying a spear. He accused the ANC of having insulted his manhood and 'the manhood of every Zulu man'. In an attack on Nelson Mandela he warned:

'Stop this ugly vendetta against the Zulu people and their Zuluness'. The rally rose and cheered. These men, confined to single–sex hostels were determined, no doubt, to assert their manhood in the most appropriate way.

In the middle of this orgy of epithets, up rose the British zoo keeper and casino boss, John Aspinall. He wore a dark suit but he was at home among men who wore leopard skins and lion's tooth necklaces. He also struck the 'right' note when he turned on those groups that 'made it their play to goad and taunt the Zulu nation, relying on their historic courteousness and forbearance...' The Zulu giant had been awakened, he declared, before ending in a royal salute to the Zulu king.

The voice of John Aspinall has been added to those romantic liberals who see in the Inkatha movement the resurrection of the days of King Shaka. The myth of the noble savage, once the theme of Rousseau, is being revived around these strutting warriors who are enroled, cajoled and forced to do battle in the townships. Much more needs to be said about these underemployed, unemployed, or underpaid labourers than space permits. They are as much the victim of Inkatha ambitions as they are the predators of the township. But what they do not need is the romantic rubbish, taken from the novels of Rider Haggard, to justify their behaviour. They certainly could do without the exhortations of Aspinall and the nonsense he spoke when he declared:

> In my childhood I made two vows. One was to model my life on the values of the ancient Zulu nation. The other was, when the time came, to come to KwaZulu and try to pay back the debt I owed your ancestors for giving me a model of how a life should be lived and also how somebody should die. (All quotations from David Beresford, *Guardian*, 27 May 1991)

Rider Haggard, that apologist for colonial conquest, who gloated over the defeat of Lobengula in what was to become Rhodesia, has much to be condemned for. He can now add, from beyond the grave, one more reactionary acolyte to his string of admirers.

The role of Rider Haggard in spreading myths about colonial conquest and noble savages is discussed by Tim Couzens in 'Literature and Ideology: The Patterson Embassy to Lobengula, 1878, and **King Solomon's Mines**.'. (The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Vol 5, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1974)