

## THE BIRTH OF UMKHONTO WE SIZWE: OLD AND NEW SOURCES

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The history of the South African liberation movement is still to be written. Academic books and articles published so far left too many of its pages blank or contain information which can't withstand a scrutiny.

Among the bibliographies on the anti-apartheid struggle Peter Limb's "The ANC and the Black Workers in South Africa, 1912-1992" should be singled out as well as books by Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart. However, no special bibliography on "Umkhonto we Sizwe" (MK) has been compiled so far except for an introductory bibliography prepared by Sandile Schaik and the author for the Conference on the Beginnings of the Armed Struggle in South Africa convened in December 1995 by the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at the University of the Western Cape.

### Who took a decision and when?

The early history of MK is a subject to controversy. The question of when and how the decision was taken is a subject of debate among academics. Naturally nobody knew this better than the participants themselves but even the evidence of those who participated in the events directly is somewhat contradictory.

The possibility of using an armed form of struggle was discussed in Congress Alliance and communist circles immediately after the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960 if not before. The mood was growing that under repressive conditions a position of non-violence was becoming more and more irrelevant. Some people even called it treacherous. Tom Lodge in his book *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* claims that the SACP "resolved itself in favour of a campaign of economic sabotage to precede a guerrilla war" at the Party conference in December 1960.<sup>1</sup> His claim echoes information provided in the book written by a police agent, Gerard Ludi, hardly to be regarded as a reputable source for any academic work. Moreover, even Ludi did not have first hand information but referred to the evidence of a deceased person who had never been a member of the Communist Party!<sup>2</sup>

A rather contradictory picture emerges around the decision to change forms of struggle. Tom Lodge, referring to Ludi as well as to a seminar paper presented in Britain<sup>3</sup> writes that "there was no internal debate on the adoption of violence within the upper echelons of the Congress alliance."<sup>4</sup> However, on the same page, he contradicts himself, this time referring to Nelson Mandela's speech in court, that such a move was discussed

<sup>1</sup> T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa from 1945* (1983), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> G. Ludi, *Operation Q-018* (1969), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> R. Lambett, *Resistance in South Africa 1950-1961: An assessment of the political strike campaigns*. University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Seminar paper, 25 August 1987, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Lodge, *Black politics*, p. 233.

at the ANC Executive meeting in June 1961, i.e. in these very "high echelons"...<sup>5</sup>

What is correct is the fact that not all members of the ANC leadership participated in taking such a decision. Apparently certain problems arose due to the delay in informing the ANC President General Albert Luthuli exiles by the authorities to his native town in Natal. According to Brian Bunting, who based his story mostly on interviews with Moses Kotane, "Luthuli was not involved in the discussions which led to the formation of Umkhonto." This delay not only arose out of organisational difficulties and the lack of communications with him in Natal. Apparently some ANC leaders were reluctant "to engage in a discussion that might result in a presidential veto before it was necessary."<sup>6</sup>

According to Kotane, it was after the armed operations began that the ANC leadership at Luthuli's request sent its representatives to explain the decision. But he was not satisfied and demanded that Moses Kotane come to Grootville. After a lengthy talk in the bush near Luthuli's house, the ANC President General finally stated that he would not condemn the participation of ANC members in armed actions, though he himself could not propose to apply violence. With a sense of humour he said to Kotane: "When my son decides to sleep with a girl, he does not ask for my permission, but just does it. It is only afterwards, when the girl is pregnant and the parents make a case that he brings his troubles home."<sup>7</sup>

Mary Benson wrote that later, in August 1962, when Luthuli met Mandela he "criticised the failure to consult him and the ANC 'grassroots'." But in the opinion of Mandela the action of the ANC leadership had been "tactically correct" because it wanted to protect "Luthuli and the ANC from involvement in the drastic change in policy."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed the structural form of the armed resistance - the formation of a special organisation - Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), or MK, separate from the ANC but in practice subordinate to its political leadership, prevented the regime from accusing the members of the ANC as a whole of connivance in the armed struggle and even left open the possibility of unbanning the ANC.

There was perhaps a further rationale behind this form of organisation. Since the liberation struggle at that stage was united in the Congress Alliance and different national groups participated in it mostly through their "own" organisations the combat structure had to be united. The creation of a military organisation by one of Congresses, even the strongest, could have been regarded as a violation of the unity of action. Furthermore the juridical position of the Alliance members was different. Only the ANC was officially banned at that time.

The evidence that the idea of armed resistance was not imposed from above or imported from outside South Africa is contained in the memoirs of Umkhonto members. One such member, Andrew Masondo, who later became the National Commissar of the ANC and then Major-General in the new South African National Defence Force, wrote:

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> B. Bunting, *op cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269

<sup>8</sup> M. Benson, *Nelson Mandela*, (1986), p. 116.

"The idea of the movement moving away from its non-violence stance was discussed within youth circles even earlier than 1960. I remember that a group of us at Fort Hare actually formed a group to prepare for the eventuality of an armed struggle taking place."<sup>9</sup>

Steve Tshwete, Commissar of Umkhonto we Sizwe in the late 1980s (now Minister of Sport and Recreation), analysed possible options of the struggle thus:

There were [after the banning of the ANC] views that the struggle could still be prosecuted and led by the same movement under a different name. But such a conception would have presupposed a smothering of the revolutionary demands and aims of the movement. It would also mean a deep-going revision of our entire tactical approach to a struggle whose mass character could not be jettisoned for purposes of protecting legality. At the same time there was the more popular idea that some other methods of struggle other than 'legal' should be pursued for the realisation of the freedoms enshrined in the Freedom Charter.

Though, as Tshwete indicates, at that stage at the level of the masses "there could... be no precise stipulation or identification" of these methods, and that "the reality of armed struggle still remained a strange concept to the whole of the subcontinent."<sup>10</sup> He described the Pietermaritzburg All-in conference in March 1961 a watershed.

Another key witness-participant is Joe Modise, the Umkhonto Commander for many years who took the post of the Defence Minister of a new South Africa in May 1994. He said that even before Sharpeville and the ANC banning the youth questioned the policy of non-violence although they adhered to it. Later, but prior to the formation of Umkhonto, a group of young people, including Modise, tried "to stop the trains that ran between Soweto and Johannesburg" to strengthen the call for a strike in May 1961, and attempted to destroy telephone communications.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the pressure of a good part of the membership, especially the youth, international developments no doubt also played a part. If in the past the Indian experience of non-violent struggle was an example for many South Africans (more so because of Mahatma Gandhi's connections with the country), at that time they looked for inspiration to African countries, where armed struggle was already being either planned or waged. Moreover, the example of India changed too after the Indian Army liberated Goa from Portuguese rule in December 1961.

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<sup>9</sup> Dawn. *Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Souvenir Issue. 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of MK*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The example of Algeria was perhaps most inspiring: by the end of 1961 it became clear that France would have to leave. Soon after the first actions of Umkhonto, the SACP magazine wrote:

Militarily, strategically, the South African government starts off weaker than the French in Algeria. Its armed forces are smaller; the exclusively white pool from which it can draw further recruits is minute by comparison with the French "reserves" of population; its armaments are inferior; its industrial base is infinitely smaller; incapable of producing an internal combustion engine, a tank or an aeroplane. It is isolated. Not a single supporter - neither British reactionaries with fascist leanings nor millionaires with heavy investments in "Kaffirs" - would dare raise a hand to support Verwoerd in civil war.<sup>12</sup>

History proved that such optimism was rather excessive. The South African authorities managed to draw into the SADF not only an adequate number of whites but others as well; production of sophisticated military equipment was organised; and perhaps more important, reactionaries from Britain and other Western countries more than once "raised hands" covertly or overtly to support Verwoerd and his successors.

The theory of "foco" advanced by Che Guevara had some influence too, though it was not supported directly. "Experience, particularly in Cuba and Algeria," wrote Michael Harmel (A. Lerumo) in the *African Communist*, "has shown that it is an academic and mistaken approach for revolutionaries to observe events in a detached spirit awaiting the situation where 'conditions are ripe for insurrection'. While adventurism and 'playing with revolution' are always to be avoided, the overwhelming lesson of the events in these countries is that the starting of their building of people's armed forces, however small to begin with, is in itself a tremendously important factor, helping to ripen and mature the revolutionary crisis, to create the conditions for victory, to act as the detonator of repercussions and reverberations far beyond the calculations of those who forget the revolutionary spirit of the masses, who attempt to gauge the outcome of a people's struggle against tyranny merely by counting the size and fire-power of the units which each, at the beginning, is able to put in the field."<sup>13</sup>

And, last but not least, the experience of anti-colonial struggle in South Africa, the traditions of armed resistance to the foreign domination as well as the militant actions of Africans in a number of rural areas towards the end of the 1950s contributed to the adoption of a new course of action.

### **What role did the SACP play?**

The next question is about the actual role South African communists played in changing the form of struggle. To what extent did they influence the ANC and other Congresses in this regard and to what extent were structural rearrangements initiated by them?

An important step into reassessment of the situation and methods of struggle was done in the SACP Central Committee's statement "South Africa - What Next". Before it had

<sup>12</sup> *African Communist*, October-December 1962.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, N 9, p. 51.

been made public, its draft, written, as I heard later, by Michael Harmel, was circulated in August 1960 as a confidential document among the members for comment and criticism. It contained a special part "Violent or Non-violent", which said in particular: "Non-violence" is not an absolute principle. It was correct in the past, and still is today, to warn the people against being provoked into desperate and useless acts of unorganized retaliation. But if Verwoerd regime continues to butcher unarmed and defenceless people, it comes when it will become worse that futile - even treacherous. The stage may be reached in the life of any nation when the stern and sacred duty presents itself to organise for battle. [It is hardly accidental that Umkhonto we Sizwe Manifesto echoed this phrase: "The time comes in the life of every nation where remains only two choices - submit or fight."] <sup>14</sup> Should that day come the world will now who is the aggressor and who is responsible for the bloodshed and suffering that will result. <sup>15</sup>

The situation in South Africa after Sharpeville was analysed in the Political Report to the SACP Conference held at the end of 1960. In particular, taking into account the peasant revolt in Pondoland, the Political Report to the Conference raised the question of the role of the armed route to the struggle in South Africa.

We do not seek to use force, but we are not pacifists who refuse under any and all circumstances to resort to force. We do not, either, play at revolution, using force where forceful actions are not properly prepared for, or attempting to substitute armed putschist bands for mass struggle... What the government is preparing for throughout the country in the future is armed counter-revolution. We must ask ourselves seriously whether the non-violent tactics and the methods of the past are adequate to deal with even more bitter battles which are looming ahead. <sup>16</sup>

The report underlined that by preparing a pamphlet "South Africa - What Next" the SACP "opened the discussion on this matter of violence and non-violence... That discussion deals chiefly with slogans; but we must concern ourselves not only with slogans, but also with tactics and methods of struggle. We must consider whether armed counter-revolution can be effectively opposed by passive resistance." <sup>17</sup> However, the SACP leadership's approach was still very cautious: "...we must remind ourselves that just as the possibility of peace can disarm us in the international field if we are not vigilant, so too illusions about the inevitability of non-violence can disarm us in the local struggle." <sup>18</sup>

That approach was confirmed in a special resolution "On forms of struggle". It spoke about the probability of "a violent people's struggle" against "military counter-revolution", prepared by the Government. "While the people seek peaceful solutions to their

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in A. Lerumo, *Fifty fighting years* (1980), p. 95.

<sup>15</sup> "South Africa - What next?" Draft statement of the South Africa Communist Party circulated to members for comments and criticism before being issued to the people of South Africa (1960), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Bulletin N2. Political report (s.a.e.l.), p. 3, ANC London Collection, Mayibuye Centre Archives, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

problems at all times where such solutions exist, we would be betraying our duty to the people if we do not warn of the prospect of violent clash, and prepare the people for the use of force against armed counter-revolution."

It recognised that "the use of organised armed forces against the State, directed by the leading organisations of the people, is a part of the tactics of the revolutionary struggle, and is a necessary complement of the mass political agitation in such situations as that now developing [but not yet developed] in South Africa."<sup>19</sup> At the same time it strongly opposed as dangerous "acts of violence and terror", undertaken as "individual acts of protest against society." These could bring "heavy retaliation by the authorities" and "serve to divide the people and to undermine the confidence of the masses in their political organisations and leaders."<sup>20</sup>

The actual circumstances surrounding the taking of the decision and the role of communists in that act are interpreted differently by various sources. As we have already mentioned, some sources claimed that the decision on this matter was taken by the SACP in 1960. But even the "sensitive" documents of that period, such as "Notes on some aspects of the political situation in the Republic of South Africa", a working paper written by Moses Kotane in November 1961 during his visit to Moscow, contradicts that view. Kotane stated that it was in 1961 that the leaders of the liberation movement, including communists, decided to use in future "some elements of violence" during mass struggle, "such as picketing and breaking of communications."<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it appears that when Kotane left South Africa for Moscow (he arrived there in mid-October 1961) he did not yet know that the first actions of Umkhonto would start in two months time. In any case he did not mention it to his Soviet counterparts in a rather confidential discussion.

Valuable sources on the history of the ANC and the SACP in this period are the interviews, conducted by Brian and Sonia Bunting in preparation for writing Bunting's political biography of Moses Kotane. Those interviews, available in the Mayibuye Centre Historical Papers Archive, help us better to understand many aspects of the liberation struggle in South Africa, including the dramatic change of its forms in 1961 as well as the relationship between the ANC and the SACP. Nevertheless even this first-hand information is rather contradictory. For example, a prominent ANC Executive member M. B. Yengwa claimed that "MK had nothing to do with communists at all, it flowed out of the national movement."<sup>22</sup>

However, another participant, whose name I would not mention for ethical reasons, painted a rather opposite picture: "...Rusty [Lionel Bernstein, member of the SACP Executive Committee] gave this report for armed struggle. It was discussed at some length and accepted, it was very unspecific but everybody knew that some steps would

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> M. Kotane, "Notes on some aspects of the political situation in the Republic of South Africa", 9 November 1961 (Moscow), p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> Mayibuye Centre Historical Papers (hereafter MCHP), Brian Bunting's Collection (hereafter BBC), interview with Y. M. Yengwa, 30 August 1973.

be taken in this direction and in fact it was a very important decision. If I remember rightly, Nelson [Mandela] was against violence, I think he had some reservations in this particular meeting. I don't say he was opposed to it, but he did have some reservation and said it would be difficult to sell this to the ANC, particularly to Luthuli."<sup>23</sup>

Nelson Mandela explained at his trial in 1964 the SACP rendered support to Umkhonto shortly after it was constituted.<sup>24</sup> Karis and Gerhart wrote however: "...this seems academic in the light of the intimate *de facto* cooperation between African nationalists like Mandela and Sisulu and white, Indian and African communists like Slovo, Ahmed Kathrada, Kotane and Marks."<sup>25</sup>

Important evidence of the decision making process in 1961 is contained in the minutes of discussions which took place between the delegations of the ANC and the SACP in May 1969, immediately after the ANC Consultative Conference in Morogoro. At this highly confidential gathering Joe Slovo, having underlined that this was "the first formal meeting ever to take place between two organisations which walked with hand clasp[ed] together for many years", emphasised "the simultaneous decision by both leadership to chart the new way - the way of armed struggle."<sup>26</sup>

Paramount is the evidence of Joe Modise, published in the Umkhonto magazine *Dawn* in 1986, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. He said that after preliminary discussion with some members of the ANC leadership, in particular Duma Nokwe, Secretary General, and Walter Sisulu, he was invited to Stanger in Natal, "where the African National Congress, South African Communist Party, Coloured People's Congress, South African Indian Congress and Congress of Democrats met to discuss this new method of struggle. After two days of consultations it was agreed that the ANC and SACP were going to undertake this new form of struggle whilst the other movements that were still legal should continue working legally. It was then decided that MK was going to be launched."<sup>27</sup>

In practically fulfilling this decision, the major role players were Nelson Mandela and Joe Slovo, at that time a member of the SACP Central Committee and a veteran of World War II. Joe Slovo himself at least once mentioned the creation of Umkhonto, and the move from a policy of non-violence to one of violence as one of the "major struggles", initiated by the leadership of the SACP.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the South African communists had unique facilities in this respect. At that time only whites in South Africa had easy access to arms, only they handled arms in the Army and therefore practically only whites could be military instructors for other members of Umkhonto inside South Africa. White communists such as Arthur Goldreich, who acquired his skills from Jewish military units

<sup>23</sup> MCHP, BBC, Interview with a SACP and Umkhonto member (name withdrawn for ethical reasons). Typed October 1973.

<sup>24</sup> N. Mandela, *The Struggle is my life*, (1986), p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> T. Karis and G. Gerhart, *Challenge and violence*, p. 648.

<sup>26</sup> MCHP, Yusuf Dadoo's Collection, Notes on discussions between a delegation from the C.C. of the SACP and the NEC, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Dawn. Souvenir issue*, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup> MCHP, BBC, Interview with Joe Slovo, September 1973.

in Palestine and especially Jack Hodgson, who participated in World War II, played an important role.

The South African experience contained unique features, different from other countries conducting liberation struggles, such as Algeria, where the Communist Party had combats units separate from the FLN. Govan Mbeki, ANC and SACP veteran, who was later Deputy President of the Senate in the South African Parliament, wrote: "The South African Communist Party lost no time in setting up sabotage units while the ANC also formed its own. Towards the end of the year [1961], however, these units were merged..."<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, even if such SACP units existed they were short-lived. In a memorandum, brought to Moscow in January 1963 South African communists emphasised, that "the Party is not, and under present conditions does not in the immediate future expect to be of a mass character. Any exclusively Party fighting force, therefore, could not possibly have the mass popular character which a people's force of national liberation should rightly have".<sup>30</sup>

Further details were given by Joe Slovo in the aforementioned issue of *Dawn*: "To constitute the High Command the ANC appointed Mandela and the Party appointed me. We were instructed by both bodies to make recommendation about the balance of members of the High Command, which we did and it was endorsed. We were then given the mandate to proceed to create MK structures in all the main regions. Regional commands were established in the main urban centres..."<sup>31</sup>

At first the High Command of Umkhonto comprised three persons from each organisation: Mandela, Sisulu, Andrew Mlangeni, Slovo, Govan Mbeki and Raymond Mhlaba. Later Joe Modise was appointed as well. Other well-known persons, Ahmed Kathrada, Arthur Goldreich, Dennis Goldberg, Jack Hodgson and Elias Motsoaledi constituted the Johannesburg Regional Command and assisted the High Command.<sup>32</sup>

However, another leader of the SACP described the Party's initial role in the creation of Umkhonto differently. John ("Uncle J. B.") Marks, at that time the SACP National Chairman, wrote in Moscow Pravda in 1971, that the Party reconsidered the thesis on non-violence at its Congress in 1962 and that the ANC leaders, who took a lesson from their bitter experience, agreed with their position. "The revolutionaries, communists and non-communists decided to create their own armed forces - Umkhonto we Sizwe".<sup>33</sup> But one cannot exclude the possibility that the text of Marks's article was "improved" by the Pravda editors. In any case the reference in the article to the SACP congress which took place at the end of 1962, a year after the commencement of Umkhonto operations does not look convincing at all.

<sup>29</sup> G. Mbeki, *The struggle for liberation in South Africa: A short history*, Mayibuye Centre, Belville, (1992), p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum (s.a.e.l), p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Dawn. Souvenir issue*, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Pravda*, Moscow, 29 July 1971.



### What about the new sources?

One would expect that after the unbanning of the ANC and SACP, when leaders and activists of these organisations are free to tell their story not in a hostile environment but to a broad local and international audience, the historic picture would become much more comprehensive and closer to the reality. Joe Slovo wrote in his *Unfinished Autobiography*: "The short accounts that have been published about the formation of MK have been drawn from the court speeches by Nelson Mandela and Bram Fischer in their respective trials. Understandably, the racist courtroom is not the most appropriate forum for establishing this kind of history, and some elaboration is required".<sup>34</sup>

However, newly emerging evidence is again contradictory. It's hard to imagine a more authoritative source than Nelson Mandela, the first MK Commander-in-Chief. Mandela's autobiography, *A long walk to freedom*, prepared with the assistance of Richard Stengel, an American journalist, gives a different account of Luthuli's attitude to launching the armed struggle from the report given by Kotane to Bunting. According to Mandela, during the ANC Executive Committee meeting in Durban, Luthuli initially resisted Mandela's argument in favour of the use of violence. However, "...we worked on him the whole night and I think that in his heart he realised we were right. He ultimately agreed that a military campaign was inevitable", though "The Chief and others suggested that we should treat this new resolution as if the ANC has not discussed it."<sup>35</sup>

Mandela gives an explanation to the conflicting reports about Luthuli's position:

...the chief was not well and his memory was not what it had been once. He chastised me for not consulting him about the formation of MK. I attempted to remind him of the discussions we had in Durban about taking up violence, but he did not recall them. This is in large part why the story has gained currency that Chief Luthuli was not informed about the creation of MK and was deeply opposed to the ANC taking up violence.<sup>36</sup>

As to the actual formation of the Umkhonto Command Mandela writes:

Although the Executive of the ANC did not allow white members, MK was not thus constrained. I immediately recruited Joe Slovo and along with Walter Sisulu we formed the High Command with myself as chairman. Through Joe I enlisted the efforts of white Communist Party members who had resolved on a course of violence...<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, Slovo in his autobiography virtually repeats the version published by him in the *Dawn* article mentioned above:

A High Command was appointed consisting, in the first place, of Mandela representing the ANC's working group in Johannesburg and me

<sup>34</sup> J. Slovo, *The unfinished autobiography*, (1995), p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> N. Mandela, *Long walk to freedom. The autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. (1995), p. 322.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 343-343.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

representing the Central Committee. We were asked to make recommendations on the rest of the High Command and these were considered and decided upon by the ANC and the Party leadership.<sup>38</sup>

The academic (and public at the same time) discussion on the beginnings of the armed struggle in South Africa started at the above-mentioned conference organised by the Mayibuye Centre in December 1995. Some questions were cleared up, but many remained for future historians.

Let us try to sum up. Was the question of using the armed form of struggle discussed in the SACP? Definitely yes. Were the communists the first to raise it in the Congress Alliance structures? Probably. But the mood for more radical actions was growing in the ranks of the ANC and other Alliance organizations as well as beyond. As mentioned above, some actions had already been undertaken. What has to be emphasised in spite of all the controversies is the fact that the decision to create MK was taken by South Africans themselves among the leading antiracist organisations.

### **The hand of Moscow?**

The first actions of Umkhonto on 15 and 16 December 1961 and in the following months are well documented. Perhaps what should be emphasised once more is that the form of action - sabotage - was, according to Nelson Mandela, chosen with the specific purpose of avoiding loss of life and to offer "the best hope for future race relations" in the light of "the ANC heritage of non-violence and racial harmony."<sup>39</sup>

Apart from this, the other major consideration was of a more practical nature. As Slovo wrote later, a strategy of "the immediate unleashing of the armed struggle" could not be applied in South Africa in the early 1960s, because of "a gap between the people's disenchantment with exclusively non-violent methods and their readiness and capacity to storm the citadels of the enemy."<sup>40</sup>

Such an approach proved to be partially correct. Many people who were staunch supporters of non-violence were ready to agree with the actions against objects but not persons. But the gap between disappointment in non-violence and the actual readiness of broad masses of people to risk their lives in the armed struggle persisted throughout the early 1960s and beyond. Joe Slovo wrote: "The response of the regime was increased repression. It was clear to all and we had demonstrated to the movement and to the leadership elements which were in doubt that there was no way forward short of preparing for effective escalation of revolutionary violence."<sup>41</sup> When it became clear that "a real people's army" had to be built the High Command and its structures devoted a lot of energy "to sending out of the country a contingent of many hundreds of experienced political cadres at all levels who were subsequently trained in the art of

<sup>38</sup> Slovo, *Unfinished autobiography*, p. 148.

<sup>39</sup> Mandela, *Struggle*, p. 167.

<sup>40</sup> J. Slovo, "No middle road" in B. Davidson, J. Slovo and A. Wilkinson, *Southern Africa. The new politics of revolution*, (1976), p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> *Dawn. Souvenir issue*, p. 24.

guerrilla warfare and military struggle."<sup>42</sup>

The organisation of such training was one of the purposes of Nelson Mandela's trip abroad in 1962. He was greatly assisted in his mission by Oliver Tambo who left South Africa at the end of March 1960, complying with a decision of the ANC leadership to organise an international solidarity campaign. The list of African countries which organised training immediately after Nelson Mandela's trip is noteworthy. Morocco, in the first years of independence, took an active anticolonial position and its territory was used by Algerian freedom fighters as their base. The leaders of newly-independent Algeria considered their country to be a vanguard of the liberation movement in Africa; even the ruling party's paper was called *Revolution Africaine*. While the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, maintained fairly close links with Western countries (especially the United States) he claimed the role of "Patriarch" for the emerging independent African states. He facilitated the convening of the first African Summit in May 1963 in Addis Ababa and insisted on opening the Organisation of African Unity Headquarters there.

A special role in respect of African nationalist movements was played by Egypt. I witnessed the great attention paid in 1960, the "Africa Year", and in the following years by the Egyptian leadership, especially Gamal Abdel Nasser, the media and, what was more striking, by every educated Egyptian to the liberation struggles of Africa. Egypt rendered both political and practical support, including military assistance.

As to the countries outside Africa, Joe Modise recalls: "I think we have sent one group to China; from then onwards we acquired most of our training from the Soviet Union."<sup>43</sup> There were apparently several reasons for the African National Congress and the SACP leadership addressing the Soviet Union for this kind of assistance. For one, facilities in the African countries were rather limited and the political situation there was not always conducive. In Algeria, for example, the situation was rather unstable due to sharp contradictions within the ruling FLN. The authorities of Morocco and demanded political references for all the trainees (perhaps worried about their "communist connections") and Ethiopians even suggested using American servicemen, stationed in that countries, for training South Africans.

There is a widespread view that the friendly relations between the USSR and the ANC and the assistance provided to the South African liberation movement over three decades arose from the ANC's alliance (informal as it was) with the South African Communist Party. How true is this? What led to co-operation? What political structures and personalities were involved?

Firstly, it should be underlined that a fresh start was needed in 1960 for Soviet relations with the South African liberation forces. Whatever ties existed earlier between the Communist Party of South Africa (and to an extent the ANC) and the Soviet Union, were completely severed after the beginning of World War Two and the subsequent dissolution of the Comintern. True, the Soviet Consulate in Pretoria and its branch in Cape Town naturally maintained some contact with the CPSA (until its banning in 1950)

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Dawn. Souvenir issue*, p. 12.

and the Congress Movement, but those contacts did not serve as a channel of communications between the South African political organisations and the ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately a number of publications have (to put it mildly) confused the matter. I refer here not merely to the propaganda masterpieces of the Verwoerd/Vorster/Botha period, but also to recent "academic" writing, such as *Comrades against Apartheid* by Stephen Ellis (former editor of the *Africa Confidential*), and his co-author, so-called 'Tsepo Sechaba'. They quote police agent Gerard Ludi who alleged that even the Freedom Charter was "sent to the Moscow Africa Institute for approval."<sup>44</sup> Too much confidence in their intelligence sources let the authors down: the decision to establish the Africa Institute was taken in June 1959, exactly four years after the Charter was adopted by the Congress of the People in Kliptown!

The SACP request for its representatives to be received in Moscow for discussion on "establishment of contacts and rendering support" was passed to Moscow by the Communist Party of Great Britain through the USSR Embassy in London. Presentation of this matter to the leadership by the CPSU International Department officials clearly shows the absence of bilateral relationship as well as lack of information:

In 1952 [sic!] the Communist Party of South Africa announced its self-dissolution but according to British friends [read: British communists], it continues its activity underground. The leadership of the Party regularly conducts meetings, directing the main efforts at the work in the mass organisations. During the recent pogroms [this word was used to describe the arrests after Sharpeville] many South African Communists underwent repressions and others are in difficult material conditions.<sup>45</sup>

The "Voortrekker" character of this mission was underlined by the letter of recommendation sent to the CPSU Central Committee by John Gollan, the General Secretary of the CP of Great Britain. One should remember (or be reminded) that for many years that Party played the role of a link between the communist parties and anticolonial organisations in the former British Empire and the socialist countries. The SACP delegation presented their Soviet counterparts with documents named "Political Situation in the Union of South Africa" and "The Situation in the South African Communist Party", which described the "deep crisis" after Sharpeville and contained rather self-critical analysis of the actions of the opposition forces. The SACP documents explained that in spite of arrests the Party had continued its activity. Its work was hindered however, by economic constraints, caused by both declining donations after the introduction of the State of Emergency (many contributions had come earlier from the Indian community, in which Yusuf Dadoo was extremely popular and respected) and additional expenditure on maintaining the families of detainees and the assistance to the ANC Emergency Committee.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> S. Ellis and S. Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in exile*, (1992), p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> Centre for Storage of Contemporary Documentation (hereafter CSCD), Minutes of the Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee, N 56, item 22gs, 5 July 1960.

<sup>46</sup> Y. Dadoo and V. Pillay, "The situation in the South Africa Communist Party", p. 4.

Much attention was paid by the SACP delegation to the participation of the USSR and other socialist countries in the international campaign for the isolation and boycott of South Africa. These questions, as well as "forms of fraternal assistance from the CPSU and worker's parties of the Socialist Countries",<sup>47</sup> were discussed at the meeting in the International Department of the Central Committee. A reference to the "difficult material conditions" of the SACP, mentioned above, was hardly accidental. When the question of the financial assistance to the antiracist struggle in South Africa was discussed, perhaps Yusuf Dadoo recalled the words of Mahatma Gandhi at their meeting in Patna, India, in 1947. Dadoo, as the President of the Transvaal Indian Congress raised the matter and Gandhi replied: "Well, of course, you know, when you have the struggle, money will come; don't worry about funds, funds will come, you carry on with the struggle and if the struggle goes on, funds would be there."<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, the funds did come. The newly declassified archive materials show that by the end of the same 1960 the SACP was allotted \$30,000 from the so-called "International trade union fund for assistance to left workers' organisations attached to the Romanian Council of Trade Unions".<sup>49</sup> This fund was established ten years earlier on the initiative of the Soviet Party to render material assistance to "foreign left parties, workers' and public [non-governmental] organisations, which are subjected to persecutions and repressions".<sup>50</sup>

There are many stories about "Kremlin gold", but originally only a half of the contributions to this fund came from the USSR and the rest from China, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland, Hungary and the GDR. Later, in 1958, Bulgaria also joined. However, China withdrew in 1962, when the "Soviet-Sino split" appeared. The choice of Rumania as a venue was not accidental - in the early 1950s the Cominform (a weak replica of the Comintern) and its newspaper were based in Bucharest. Moreover, initially the Board of the Fund consisted of the representatives of three parties - Soviet, Romanian and Polish and the decision taken by the Politbureau envisaged that "the material assistance will be rendered according to unanimous decisions of the Board" whose members were to be appointed annually by the agreement of the contributing parties.<sup>51</sup> It should be emphasised also that the SACP and other friendly parties have never been asked to account for these donations, it was a matter of mutual trust.

Yusuf Dadoo came to Moscow again in October 1961, this time together with Moses Kotane who left South Africa illegally and was now back in the USSR after a quarter of a century! Those who met Kotane in 1961 remember him as a very colourful, impressive, powerful person, who led all the discussions in Moscow. The very fact that

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> MCHP, YDC, Y. Dadoo's interview with B. R. Nanda, 15 October 1971.

<sup>49</sup> CSCD, Head of the CPSU CC International Department B. N. Ponomarev's report on expenditures of the "International Trade Union Fund for assistance to Left Worker's Organisations attached to the Romanian Council of Trade Unions", 2 November 1960.

<sup>50</sup> CSCD, Extract from the Minutes of the Politbureau of the AUCP(b) Central Committee N 76/12, 19 July 1950.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

he was a communist of a "Comintern mould" also contributed into re-establishing the full-scale relations between the two parties. Yet he was lucky to return to the USSR in Khrushchev's days, after the criticism of Stalin's "cult of personality", when old assessments of people underwent a critical review. Otherwise some references, "inherited" by the International Department from the Comintern, associating Kotane with the "Roux-Gomas factionist group" might have had more influence with his Soviet interlocutors.

The occasion was special: the South African communists were for the first time invited to the 22nd CPSU congress, which adopted under the leadership of Khrushchev the new Programme of the Party, promising to build a communist society in one generation's lifetime... On 21 October a discussion took place in the CPSU Headquarters between the South African delegation and Vitaly Korionov, Deputy Head of the International Department. Though of a preliminary nature, it had special significance: for the first time the South African side touched upon the possibility of using an armed form of struggle. They said that after the discussion in the framework of the Congress Alliance, the SACP created a special Sub-Committee that had (together with the ANC representatives) to elaborate the practical steps to train the cadres and to prepare for sabotage. Moreover, the Party leadership had already arranged with the Chinese for military and political studies for the first group of trainees, who were already on their way. (This group, mentioned by Joe Modise, included prominent ANC members Raymond Mhlaba, Wilton Mkwayi, Joe Gqabi, Andrew Mlangeni, Patrick Mtembu, who later became a state witness, and the SAIC member Steve Naidoo.)<sup>52</sup>

After the CPSU Congress the newly elected Central Committee Secretariat at its first meeting instructed Boris Ponomarev to receive the South African delegation jointly with Korionov.<sup>53</sup> Before the meeting the SACP delegation passed to the International Department a written document, "Notes on Some Aspects of the Political Situation in the Republic of South Africa" signed by Moses Kotane.

The approach of the Soviet side was summarised in Ponomarev's words: "You know better." Particularly a cautious position was taken on the question of the armed struggle as well. This matter was regarded by Ponomarev as important enough to be reported specifically to the CPSU's top leadership. Ponomarev wrote, that in the opinion of the South African communists, "under the conditions of the reign of terror by the fascist government which has at its disposal a huge military and police machinery the peaceful way of reaching the tasks of liberation and revolutionary movements at present are excluded. The Party has decided to proceed from the necessity of the preparation for the armed forms of struggle. They ask the Central Committee of the CPSU to express its opinion whether such course is correct. At the same time the comrades request to render them support in training several military instructors."

The report, sent to the Central Committee on 24 November, further stated: "The Marxist Leninist doctrine on combination of all forms of struggle was elucidated to the South African comrades. At the same time they were informed that the opinion of the Central Committee would be conveyed to them later on the question of their tactics on a new

<sup>52</sup> Discussion with R. Mhlaba, Moscow, 6 August 1992.

<sup>53</sup> CSCD, Minutes of the Secretariat, N1, item 3g, 2 November 1961.

stage of struggle". They were informed also that the USSR "would be able to render the SACP possible assistance using for this in particular the facilities in some friendly African countries, for example in Guinea and Ghana."

Ponomarev requested permission from the Central Committee to convey officially to Kotane and Dadoo the following:

Taking into account the situation in the country [South Africa] we agree with the opinion expressed by comrades Kotane and Dadoo. At the same time the intention of the SACP to take a course of armed forms of struggle places on the Party great responsibility. It is necessary not to counterpoise one form of struggle to the others but to combine skilfully all these forms. The armed struggle is a struggle of the broad peoples' masses. It means that in the conditions of the preparation for the armed struggle the political work to win the masses acquires decisive importance. Without consistent political and organisational work among the masses victory is impossible. The winning of the masses to your side and preparation for the armed struggle are two sides of the same question. Both these tasks should be accomplished in close interconnection.

"Certain assistance" was also promised in training of instructors.<sup>54</sup>

On 28 November 1991 the opinion expressed by Ponomarev was endorsed by the Central Committee Secretariat.<sup>55</sup> For a historical record it should be noted that the position of the CPSU leadership was conveyed to Moses Kotane (who stayed in the USSR for some time) after the first actions of Umkhonto we Sizwe had already been carried out. (A hand-written confirmation of this fact on a document by Petr Manchka, the head of the CPSU African Section, was made even later - in February 1962).<sup>56</sup>

The Soviet support for the armed struggle apparently resulted also in the increase of the financial assistance to the SACP, from \$50,000 in 1961<sup>57</sup> to \$112,445 in 1962.<sup>58</sup> It was much later, in December 1962, that the SACP requested a meeting in Moscow to discuss steps to give practical assistance to Umkhonto.<sup>59</sup> Representatives were Arthur Goldreich and Vella Pillay.

Tom Lodge, perhaps the best known writer on the history of the liberation movement in South Africa in the 1960s-1970s, states that Goldreich "visited Eastern Europe to arrange military assistance from the Soviet bloc... at about the same time as Mandela's

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<sup>54</sup> CSCD, Decisions taken by the instruction of the Secretaries of the CPSU Central Committee without recording the minutes, N 478, 28 November 1961.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>57</sup> CSCD, Head of the Central Committee International Department B. N. Ponomarev's report, 1 November 1961.

<sup>58</sup> CSCD, Head of the Central Committee International Department B. N. Ponomarev's report, 3 January 1963.

<sup>59</sup> CSCD, Minutes of the Secretariat, N50, item 46g, 11 December 1962.



trip abroad.<sup>60</sup> But the visit actually took place almost a year later: Mandela left the country in January 1962 whereas Goldreich arrived in Moscow in January 1963 and his requests to the Soviet side took into account the results of Mandela's mission. (Unfortunately Lodge also dates Mandela's visit inaccurately: January 1961 instead of January 1962.<sup>61</sup> This may be a typing error but should be noted, as Lodge's book is often considered a "Bible" and the mistake is repeated elsewhere.)

In the memorandum, presented to the Soviets, the SACP described the efforts of the ANC and SACP to organise training of Umkhonto cadres:

Negotiations are at present under way for the establishment of an all-South African training camp in friendly territory, where opportunities will exist for expanding the training programme both in scope and in effectiveness, by enabling recruits to be trained and supervised by designated representatives of UWS [Umkhonto we Sizwe] itself, rather than - as at present - by military personnel of other countries whose political orientation is not always identical with ours.<sup>62</sup>

The Soviets were told however, that Mandela's trip to African countries in 1962 had proved, although he was warmly received there, that the large-scale training of cadres in Africa would be difficult to organise and therefore the Umkhonto High Command should seek assistance from the socialist countries. The original request was to train twenty persons in the USSR but very soon the numbers were dramatically increased. "Technical consultations" with relevant Soviet specialists were also organised for Goldreich and apparently this was the first time that assistance was rendered by the Soviet Union to Umkhonto.

Goldreich's travel to the "Eastern countries" (he also visited China) was widely publicised during the trial of the ANC and Umkhonto leaders: the police had seized his notebook. But it appears that some notes were misunderstood and contrary to the intention of security officials and pro-apartheid propagandists, the degree of Soviet involvement was underestimated. For example, the U. S. author Nathaniel Weyl in a book pretentiously entitled *Traitors' end. The rise and fall of the Communist movement in Southern Africa* refers to Goldreich's discussion "with a certain Comrade Manshisha (possibly an Algerian)."<sup>63</sup> A section of Goldreich's hand-written document, headed "C.[Comrade] Manshisha on Problems of Transport" is reproduced in Luritz Strydom's *Rivonia unmasked!*<sup>64</sup>

"C. [Comrade] Manshisha" was indeed the aforementioned Petr Ivanovich Manchkha (well known in late 1940s to Communist guerrillas inside another country - Greece - as Comrade Petrov). Quite why these "experts on terrorism and communism" thought that Soviet support would be discussed with an Algerian instead of the Soviets is a mystery.

<sup>60</sup> Tom Lodge, *Black Politics*, pp 234-235.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235

<sup>62</sup> Memorandum, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in N. Weyl, *Traitor's end. The rise and fall of the Communist movement in Southern Africa* (1970), p. 163.

<sup>64</sup> L. Strydom, *Rivonia unmasked!* (1965), pp. 113-114.



Arthur Goldreich recalls that his consultations in Moscow "were in a very practical sense influenced by the draft Operation Mayibuye plan", though this does not imply that the plan depended on the mission to Moscow. At that stage "the scope and scale of specific needs discussed in Moscow were of a very limited nature though [they] covered issues of wider significance and touched upon possibilities for continued assistance."<sup>65</sup>

Obviously the Soviet side was cautious. It became clear during the discussions that despite the modesty of the requests, the implications for the Soviet Union were very complex and serious particularly in so far as its relations with other states, especially in Africa, were concerned. It suggested that the supplies should go through independent African states.<sup>66</sup> In fact these very ideas put forward by "C. Manshisha" and other Soviet officials were reflected in Goldreich's diary:

We [the Soviet Union] don't have any relations with Verwoerd Govt. in any way. So don't care what he say. Safest and surest way, transfer of arms through country where they have normal relations. - Govt. agreement. Willingness of this government to us [here and below "us" means the liberation movement]. Govt. give us their armaments and Soviet compensates.<sup>67</sup>

During this visit the representatives of the South African liberation forces for the first time expressed the idea, which captured their minds for many years to come, of acquiring a ship, perhaps a yacht, to transport goods for Umkhonto. But here as well the Soviet side was cautious: "Transfer of armaments on high seas - difficult to speak of neutral waters...", continues Goldreich in his diary. "We realise with techniques used to-day, reloading, on high seas are located very quickly. And here when discovered - serious entanglement, particularly for us and comrades involved..."<sup>68</sup>

Welcoming the SACP representatives in Moscow the Soviet side and particularly the CP International Department officials, were anxious to establish direct contacts with the ANC top leadership, but naturally not behind the back of their friends from the Communist Party. The man who most eagerly awaited in Moscow was the most senior person in the ANC after Luthuli and the head of the Congress Exile Mission - Deputy President General Oliver Tambo. The relevant decision of the Central Committee Secretariat was taken on 22 December 1962 and he was invited through the Soviet Embassy in Dar es Salaam "to come to the USSR at any time convenient for him." The information was also conveyed to the SACP through the British Communist Party.<sup>69</sup>

It was not until three months later that Oliver Tambo arrived in Moscow. The delay was explained by the fact that he had waited for Moses Kotane to come out of South Africa. The ANC leadership insisted on Kotane being involved in the mobilisation of the external support for the liberation struggle. Tom Lodge explains Kotane's departure from South Africa in early 1963 in "anticipation of the increased responsibilities the exile

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Goldreich to the author, 34 August 1993.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Strydom, *Rivonia unmasked*, p. 113.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> CSCD, Minutes of the Secretariat, N 52, item 10g, 22 December 1962.

leadership would have in the context of a full blown guerrilla insurgency",<sup>70</sup> but in fact the Communist Party leadership initially met the ANC request on condition Kotane would return to South Africa, though the developments in the country made that impossible.

Many years later Oliver Tambo was to recall how in the first years of exile he was not at all in a hurry to visit Moscow. Perhaps his earlier prejudice against communists was an influence or he was trying to avoid siding with either "camp" in the Cold War situation, which intensified in the early 1960s. He spared no efforts to get concrete support for the ANC and Umkhonto from the West, but largely in vain.

Indeed when he tried to visit the USA in May 1960 as a key participant in the Emergency Action Conference on South Africa, convened by the American Committee on Africa, the State Department delayed his visa causing him to miss the Conference. He went on a speaking tour afterwards.<sup>71</sup> George Houser, who was for many years Secretary of the American Committee on Africa wrote later that his organisation "was rather surprised to learn that the U. S. government was giving Tambo problems with his visa. I called Washington and was at first told he was 'ineligible' for entry for undisclosed reasons." Only after "feverish protests" "finally in June the government decision was reversed. But it was too late. Tambo had missed our conference."<sup>72</sup>

In Moscow the attitude was quite different from the West. He was simply asked to present a memorandum explaining the situation in South African and the needs of the Movement. Tambo described 5 April 1963, the day he had a discussion in the CPSU Headquarters, as a historical day in the life of the South African people. From then on the direct contact between the CPSU and the ANC leadership was established.

Giving "evidence" to the US Senate Sub-Committee on Security and Terrorism in 1982, Bartholomew Hlapane claimed that Umkhonto had been the brainchild of the SACP, and after the decision to create it had been taken, Joe Slovo and John Marks were sent by the Central Committee of the SACP to Moscow to organise arms and ammunition and to raise funds for Umkhonto we Sizwe.<sup>73</sup> But Oliver Tambo had been in Moscow to discuss the assistance to Umkhonto well before Slovo and Marks left South Africa!

Oliver Tambo had every reason to say in Moscow that the South African government had no intention of understanding the first Umkhonto actions, its limited use of violence as a warning to the regime on the need for urgent changes. In this situation the ANC leadership had to alter its plans and to start immediate preparation for guerrilla warfare. The ANC leadership singled out sending activists abroad for military training as a very urgent task. They were worried that further intensification of controls by the authorities at the South African borders would make it more difficult and even impossible to get people out of the country. At the same time, large-scale training of fighters inside South

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<sup>70</sup> Lodge, *Black politics*, p. 292.

<sup>71</sup> *Meeting the challenge. The story of American Committee on Africa* (1981), p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> G. Houser, *No one can stop the rain. Glimpses of Africa's liberation struggle* (1989), p. 129.

<sup>73</sup> *The role of the Soviet Union, Cuba and East Germany in fomenting terrorism in Southern Africa*, vol 1, (1982), p. 553.

Africa proved to be extremely difficult, though many efforts had been made.

All these ambitious plans demanded much of support in cash and kind. The immediate requirement was £250 000 sterling - a really huge sum in 1963! This fund, supposed to be accumulated from various sources - in Africa, Asia and Europe - was needed for transportation and maintenance of the trainees abroad; maintenance of the Umkhonto full-timers and underground workers inside South Africa; setting up and operating of ANC offices abroad etc. It is worth mentioning here that during Mandela's trip African countries, according to his notes found by the security police, pledged initially £25 000 and he concluded the section of his report headed "Funds" with the following: "Money collecting is a job which requires a lot of time. You must be prepared to wait. Visit to socialist countries has become imperative."<sup>74</sup>

The ANC's requests were elaborated during Tambo's next visit in October 1963. He confirmed the necessity of sending new and larger groups of Umkhonto fighters for training in the USSR (Tambo spoke about 300 persons at once). He underlined that neither was there a possibility to organise relevant training in the African countries by their instructors nor was the ANC in a position to receive consent from their leaders to involve Soviet military specialists in training ANC members there.

The ANC requests were favourably received on the Soviet side, but again the CPSU representatives were primarily interested in political considerations - the state of the mass struggle, the readiness of people to respond to the ANC call for armed struggle, the attitude of the African states to the ANC, especially those which were geographically close to South Africa, and the degree of support for the ANC from democratic forces in other countries. As in the previous discussions with the SACP, the Soviet Union did not press on the ANC leaders the need for armed struggle.

Since 1963 a versatile system of co-operation between the USSR and ANC was developed. In particular, Tambo's visits resulted in the direct financial assistance to the ANC which began in 1963 and was to continue for many years to come. The first allocation for the ANC from aforementioned International Fund was \$300 000, a rather lofty sum in those years (just for comparison: MPLA of Angola and Zimbabwe African Peoples Union - ZAPU received \$50 000 each in 1963). The SACP received much less than the ANC - \$56 000, in addition \$52 000 went in 1963 to the newly established Communist Party of Lesotho;<sup>75</sup> there is good reason to believe that this sum was the destined for South African liberation movement as well.

It was mentioned in Russian press that from 1963 to 1991, 1 501 ANC activists were trained in the Soviet military institutions.<sup>76</sup> This figure is not all-inclusive as far as Umkhonto training is concerned. Besides, about two hundred more completed Soviet tertiary institutions, mostly with Masters and some with Ph D degrees (the official government figure is less, but it does not include those South Africans, who were registered as citizens of Lesotho, Zambia and other Southern African countries). About

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Strydom, *Rivonia unmasked!*, p. 108.

<sup>75</sup> CSCD, Decisions of the Secretariat, N 17, item 37g, 10 March 1962.

<sup>76</sup> *Segodnya*, no 3, 1993.

two hundred ANC and SACP members studied in the Institute of Social Sciences (International Lenin School), dozens in trade-union and youth schools. Several hundreds visited the USSR for rest and medical treatment.

Over two hundred Soviet specialists and interpreters stayed with the ANC in Angola in 1979-1991.<sup>77</sup> According to the Chief Department of Military Technical Co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, total volume of assistance to the ANC (from 1963 to 1990) was about 61 million roubles, including 52 million supplies (36 million - "special equipment" and 32 million - civilian goods). The rest is "technical assistance", mostly training of the ANC cadres in the USSR and sending Soviet specialists to Angola.<sup>78</sup> These figures are also not all embracive, because they do not include the material assistance, provided by the Soviet non-governmental organisations, such as the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. Moreover, even the accurate figures would not reflect the true picture. These sums are counted in roubles and their simple conversion into dollars at any given rate of exchange can only further distort the picture: many goods, especially military supplies were exceptionally cheap in the USSR. Perhaps the naming of the actually provided equipment gives a clearer picture: several thousands AK-47 of various modifications, over three thousand SKS carbines, over six thousand pistols, 275 grenade-launchers, ninety Grad-P missile launchers, over forty Strela 2M anti-aircraft missile launchers, twenty Malyutkas, over sixty mortars etc.<sup>79</sup> Not only the volume of assistance was significant, but it was striking that the USSR was capable and willing to render assistance in several fields when not many other countries (if any) were ready to do it. However, the Soviet Union's greatest contribution to the elimination of apartheid was not material assistance, the provision of training facilities, or other steps, described above, but the encouragement of non-racism in the ANC.

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 8 August 1992.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*