

Remembering Resistance

Apartheid Trialists in a Swedish-South African Dialogue, March 14, 2008



NELSON MANDELA
FOUNDATION

Living the Legacy



EMBASSY OF SWEDEN

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The text in this booklet is an edited version of the trialist dialogue, which took place at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Johannesburg, South Africa, on March 14, 2008. Special thanks to our partner, the Swedish Embassy, for its role.

Introduction

Verne Harris, Memory Programme Manager, Nelson Mandela Foundation

This dialogue event had its origins in the “Making Peace” exhibition, launched in Nelson Mandela’s presence at the Nelson Mandela Foundation during his birthday week in July 2007.



The exhibition celebrates the lives and work of Chief Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela, both leaders in the struggles against apartheid, and both Nobel Peace Prize winners. Included in the exhibition is a massive reproduction of a photographic collage depicting the 156 trialists in the epic Treason Trial, which started in 1956 (reproduced on the cover of this report). In the months that the exhibition remained in the Foundation’s foyer, Mr Mandela would often stand before this emblematic image and reminisce. In these moments of reflection was born the idea of a reunion of surviving former political trialists from the trials in which Mr Mandela had been a co-accused – the 1952

Defiance Campaign trial, the 1956-1961 Treason Trial, and the 1963-4 Rivonia Trial.

Over many months of research and preparation, the surviving former trialists were identified, located, and invited to a reunion at the Nelson Mandela Foundation. They were also invited to participate in a dialogue forum hosted by the Foundation which would explore the role of international solidarity in the long struggles against apartheid, with a special focus on the contribution of Sweden. The Embassy of Sweden was a co-convenor of the forum, and secured Swedish funding for both the reunion and the dialogue.



The dialogue’s audience was made up of former trialists and family members, media, anti-apartheid activists and guests of the Nelson Mandela Foundation

With the exception of five individuals living in the United Kingdom (who were invited to a separate reunion), the surviving former trialists began to gather in Johannesburg the day before the March 14, 2008 reunion. On this day many of them were taken on a group tour of Constitution Hill, the precinct of which includes the remains of three

apartheid-era prisons. All the veterans had at one time or another been incarcerated there.

On the morning of March 14 the former trialists met at the Foundation for tea and conversation with Nelson Mandela. This was followed by a communal lunch, and then the dialogue forum in the afternoon. All the former trialists participated in the forum, with three of them – Bertha Gxowa, Denis Goldberg and Ahmed Kathrada – serving on a panel together with three veterans of the anti-apartheid movement in Sweden – Per Wästberg, Birgitta Karlström Dorph, and Christian Åhlund. The panel discussion was followed by a plenary discussion which engaged a lively audience of about 150 guests and media representatives.

The impact of the event can be measured along five primary lines of enquiry:

- It was positioned within a programme of events to mark Mr Mandela's 90th birthday year. In the first instance, then, it was a gift to him. His own enjoyment at reuniting with old comrades and friends from South Africa and Sweden alone made the event worthwhile.

- For the veterans and their families, likewise, the event constituted a milestone. This is evident from the content of the report, both in its images and its text.

- Members of the Foundation's Memory Programme team were enabled to engage with the veterans, formally and

Ben and Mary Turok with Nelson Mandela



**Top: Ayesha Dawood
Above: Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Graça Machel**

informally, ensuring that they were able to build up their research resources around a significant period in South Africa's history.

- Extensive publicity around the event ensured a wide reach into local and international audiences. Media coverage, both local and international, was excellent. The Foundation's website, which has a deep global reach, reported immediately and lastingly on the event.

- The event succeeded in reminding the public of the enormous contribution of international solidarity during the struggles against apartheid. Subsequent events in South Africa have shown how important memory of such solidarity is to the building of the country's democracy.

No dialogue event worthy of the name truly ends. This one found a provisional end in London on June 29, 2008, when Nelson Mandela had tea with the United Kingdom-based former trialists, who had not attended the March 14 event. It is hoped that this report, which includes a full transcription of the dialogue forum, will extend the forum's reach and contribute to ensuring that the dialogue doesn't end.

Welcome

Mothomang Diaho, Dialogue Programme Manager, Nelson Mandela Foundation

We are gathered here today in this dialogue to honour the story of many of you who took part in South Africa’s liberation struggle. It’s thanks to your courage, your contributions, sacrifices and desire for a just society that we’re here today, living in a democracy.

It is also partly thanks to support received from partners like the Swedish government that we’re able to celebrate today. It is our wish that this dialogue will sustain the values that you fought for.



Message from the Swedish Ambassador

Anders Möllander, Swedish Ambassador to South Africa

It's a great honour for us to meet with the struggle veterans here. When I was posted here last, most of you were in prison, so to meet you now is really gratifying.

I look forward to becoming a veteran myself, now that I have met some of you. I'll give you two short examples of why I say that. We had a photo opportunity with Madiba and it was a bit crowded around the chair with the panellists and myself, and he turns to me and says, "I can sit on the floor if it's necessary." I hope I have that sort of spirit when I'm his age.



Secondly, I had lunch with Ahmed Kathrada and I remarked that he started very young in the struggle and he said, "Yes, the problem was I met Madiba when I was 16 or 17, and it's only been trouble since then." Now if this is trouble, I'd like to be part of it.

The Treason Trial, to some extent, jump-started the awareness of apartheid in Sweden, and our contribution to the struggle. Per Wästberg, who is one of the Swedish panellists sitting here, was here first in 1959, and he met some of you trialists, as well as some people who are not here today. He wrote articles in the Swedish newspapers and greatly influenced the debate in Sweden on apartheid.

In 1972/1973 Sweden had decided already that it was possible to give humanitarian aid to the liberation movements, and I'm fortunate enough to have been part of that – when we wrote the first agreed minutes on our support to the ANC refugees in exile.

That developed into a huge programme of co-operation before your elections and then with the new government here.

Birgitta Karlström Dorph came here in 1981, to the Swedish Embassy. For some reason, the apartheid regime didn't throw the Swedes out. They were afraid of starting a snowball effect by closing embassies. They kept us, in spite of the fact that we were increasingly seen as enemies.

Birgitta was responsible for making us even greater enemies, because she started the whole internal programme. She is going to tell you about that. I had the privilege of succeeding her in 1987 but I'm not going to say much more about that because I just took over and continued.

One of the people instrumental in channelling funds, in a more or less legal way, to the United Democratic Front, was Christian Åhlund, head of the International Legal Assistance Consortium. He is a Swedish lawyer, and he was not known to be a person who would protest in the streets. He was able to channel funds through his office, and he will be able to tell you about that.

We've told the Swedish panellists, although they are very proud of what they've done and eager to talk about it, not to talk too much because this is also an opportunity for us to listen to you. Tor Sellström is here. He wrote a definitive report for the Nordic Africa Institute on Swedish aid to the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. So if you wonder when you were arrested or when you received this or that money, you can always ask him: it's in his book. It's a big "who is who".

There are many more people that I could acknowledge but I must introduce Dag Sundelin. Without him we wouldn't be here today, because he's head of the development section in my office in the embassy, and when we were asked if we would support this, he immediately said yes.

The Dialogue

Achmat Dangor, CEO, Nelson Mandela Foundation

It just struck me, looking at the audience: 20 years ago this would have been an illegal gathering. Welcome to all the most subversive people in the world.

I'm going to introduce the South African panellists, starting with Bertha Gxowa. She was born in Germiston on the East Rand, where she spent her early childhood. Her experiences in the Germiston location triggered her interest in opposition politics, especially when permits were required to move in and out of the location. As a result, Bertha volunteered to be one of the first group of the defiance campaigners who went to Boksburg without permission. She was arrested and spent 10 days in prison for refusing to pay a fine. That is how a whole life of activism began. She joined the Youth League in 1954. She became a founder member of the Federation of South African Women. Then, inevitably, between 1956 and 1958, she was a defendant in the Treason Trial. She was banned in 1964 for 11 years. Today, she's in parliament, and active in politics again.

Denis Goldberg, sitting on my extreme left as usual, was a member of the Communist Party and Umkhonto weSizwe. He was sentenced in 1964, at the end of the Rivonia Trial, to four life terms in prison. Can you imagine that? How Denis was going to serve four life terms in prison I don't know. Only he would have been able to do that. He was released in 1985 after 21 years in prison. He went into exile, where he joined his family and resumed his work in the ANC.

To Bertha's right, but not politically speaking, is "Kathy", Ahmed Kathrada. Now "Mr K", as we know him, became a political activist at the early age of 12. Usually people talk about the early onset of puberty, but in Mr Kathrada's case it was the early onset of political activism. He was arrested at the internal headquarters of the ANC, and it was



said that he was a member of MK – though he still hasn't told us whether he was. He is the one who helps the Centre of Memory keep our facts straight, so he'll correct me afterwards if I make any mistakes here. He was sentenced to life imprisonment along with Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi, Raymond Mhlaba, Denis Goldberg and Walter Sisulu. He was confined to Robben Island and later moved to Pollsmoor. He also completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Criminology and B Bibliography majoring in Library Science and African Politics. He also has two Honours degrees, one in History and one in African Politics. So here is also an academic who has been hiding his talents.

I am now going to ask our first speaker, Bertha, to address us.

Bertha Gxowa, Treason Trialist

They said we must tell our memories of the Treason Trial. This is the first one that I want to mention. We were all picked up in the morning of December 5, 1956, one by one from all corners, in the early hours of the morning, and found ourselves at Marshall Square.

We did not know who was in the other cells. We just recognised people's voices. All our families rushed to Chancellor House, because the only recognised [black] lawyers then were Mandela and Tambo [whose offices were in this building], only for them to find that Mandela and Tambo had also been arrested.

Helen Joseph refuses to disclose her age

The other memory is when we were preparing a defence for the Treason Trial, Helen Joseph was one of the people who was bound to give evidence in our defence.

Helen took the stand. She first said who she was, where she came from, what she did, and all that. Then the prosecutor said, "You have been a teacher, you have been in the army, you have been a social worker, you have travelled, you have done all these things." All of us who knew Helen knew she was confident about everything, was ready to fight for the rights of women in this country. Then the question was, "You have acquired all these qualifications; how old are you?"

Helen said: "Why do you want to know my age? What has it got to do with this trial?" There was an argument, and we, the accused, just wanted to see the trial end, so we wanted Helen to tell them. Mandela and all the lawyers tried to persuade Helen to tell them her age. But Helen said: "I am not going to tell you my age until you tell me what it's got to do with the trial." The court had to adjourn.

Outside, we had a gathering of the accused. Helen said: "Even if this trial takes another 10 years, I'm not going to give my age here. It is because I'm a woman that they are discriminating against me because of my age." Helen convinced all of us in the trial that she was not going to give her age. When we came back, it was Justice Ludorf who said: "We'll carry on with the case. Helen does not have to give her age because, as she's a woman older than 21, it's not necessary."

Levy twins confuse the prosecution

There I see Norman and Leon Levy. In the courtroom, Leon and Norman planned to deliberately confuse the witnesses. After giving evidence, the lawyers would say: "Which one of the Levy twins do you mean?" That evidence would be dismissed because the witnesses could never say which one of the two they meant.

I can still go on, but these are the highlights of my memories of the Treason Trial.



Denis Goldberg, Rivonia Trialist

I'm going to observe the protocol by referring to the four legs of our struggle: our legal political actions, our underground political activity, our military activity and the international solidarity. I'm sitting amongst the giants of all those elements of our struggle.

I feel young in comparison with the veterans I'm with. I'm nearly 75, and I'm here with people 80 years old, and Madiba who's 90. It's been a hell of a long struggle.

Memories of the Rivonia Trial

Talking about the Rivonia Trial, there were some light-hearted moments and some wonderful moments too. One of those moments was knowing that there was international solidarity that made it possible for us to have a legal defence. Lawyers, too, have to eat. Two of the survivors of our defence, Arthur Chaskalson and George Bizos, are here. I would also like to remember Bram Fischer, who led the team, who's not here, and Vernon Berrangé, who also passed on. I wish they were here. I wish all this could have happened much quicker. They played such an important role.

There are many other veterans who are not here. Those of us who have survived, I congratulate us all for being here and for the role that we all played in trying to build a democratic South Africa. We're not there yet, except in formal terms. To our international supporters, what a role you've played through your example.

'The government should be on trial'

Let me go back to the trial. Let me go back to our being charged and being asked to plead and the number one accused, Nelson Mandela, standing up and saying, "I'm not guilty. It is the government that should be charged." The



judge looked a little irritated. Walter Sisulu was next and he repeated, "It is the government that should be on trial." At this point the judge intervened and said, "I will not have speeches. You answer 'guilty' or 'not guilty.'" I thought I would be clever and said, "I associate myself with the remarks of my two colleagues." The judge just smiled, and we went on with everybody saying that it was the government that should have been on trial.

'They couldn't stand the spirit amongst our people'

We used to come into court in the morning and give the *amandla* salute to the audience, and they would respond. It was a great moment, after 90 days of detention, to see friendly and smiling faces. Of course that was stopped. The judge came in first and sat down, so anything like that would now be considered contempt of court. They couldn't stand the spirit amongst our people. My answer was simply to trace my fist on the cover of my notebook and hold up my notebook. My notebook was taken away from me. By the way, fists are very dangerous things in politics.

Nelson Mandela's 'I am prepared to die' speech

There was the long battle over the indictment and its improper legal form. Minor victories, but significant for unsettling the state and beginning to calm the nerves of a hostile, brutal media who were baying for our blood. At the end of the state case and the commencement of the defence case,

The Rivonia Trial

Nelson Mandela and seven of his colleagues were jailed for life on June 12, 1964.

During the Rivonia Trial, Mr Mandela sat in the dock and said these now famous words: “During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

After the Rivonia Trial, there were scores of other political trials during which thousands suffered and were punished. Many of the trialists and their families were supported by the assistance of anti-apartheid groups throughout the world. The Swedish government and anti-apartheid movement were prominent in lending moral and financial support to activists and their families.

Denis Goldberg, Nelson Mandela and Joe Matthews



Nelson stood up to address the court. It was a powerful, wonderful speech. We had all read it and made our comments. It was Nelson's speech, without a doubt, and he ends that speech, as you remember, with his famous paragraph about being prepared to die; all his life he has upheld the idea of a society in which people can live together in harmony and it's an ideal which he hoped to live to see achieved, that it was an ideal for which, if necessary (George Bizos' addition to the speech), he was prepared to die.

There was dead silence in the court because in effect he was saying “hang me if you dare”, and for the first time I realised he was also saying “Hang Govan, hang Denis, hang Kathy, hang us all!” What I remember is pride, absolute pride at sharing this moment. You don't choose to be on trial for your life. You get taken and stuck up there, but that moment is when the value of being human becomes very special and is driven home.

Walter Sisulu takes the stand

After Nelson, Walter Sisulu took the stand. They kept him in the dock for several days. What I remember is the prosecutor, [Percy] Yutar, attempting to humiliate Walter Sisulu. Oh, did he make a mistake! Walter was calm, determined, and analytical. He spoke slowly and accurately. He made such a case for why we had done what we had done. Our defence was never really a legal defence. Rather, our defence was that it was necessary to overthrow the apartheid regime for its inhumanity, its illegality, its injustice, to bring the opportunity to build a better life.

Each of us gave evidence. I did too. I must say I enjoyed giving evidence. I enjoyed being able, for the last time for many years, to say why I had taken part.

‘Mr K’

I'm amused that my comrade Kathy [Kathrada] in the Nelson Mandela Foundation is called “Mr K”, because there was a moment in his evidence where the prosecutor cross-examining Kathy read from a document referring to a Mr K. “Do you know anybody with the name



John Nkadimeng and Denis Goldberg

K or whose name starts with K?” Kathy says, “Well, there’s Khrushchev.” Kathy, I’m not sure why you’re called Mr K, whether it’s a reference to that or not, but that was the response in the court. Your laugh is evidence enough of the humour of it.

A wonderful shock

The trial came to its end, and we were convinced we were going to be hanged. Some people say the state never wanted the death penalty. I wish they’d told us. Nelson had prepared a speech in case he was asked to speak. Walter had too, and I think the rest of us would have extemporised something to say before they hanged us. Then the judge announced that he was not going to impose the supreme penalty, which he said would be the appropriate sentence in this case, but taking various things into account, he had decided not to hang us. We laughed, we actually laughed and joked. What a wonderful shock. We weren’t going to be hanged!

Raymond Mhlaba and the case for appeal

Beforehand, Raymond Mhlaba informed me that if we were sentenced to death, we would not appeal. The reasoning was that the apartheid government would hang us and the people of South Africa would be so enraged, they would rise up and sweep the apartheid

regime away. I said, “It’s a good theory but I think I’ve read more history than you, because I think they would be very stupid to do that. They might take us one at a time, see how it goes, then regain control of the situation and carry on. In any case, Comrade Raymond, we’re going to have to rebuild our country, and it takes 30 years to build a leader like you, so I think we should appeal.” When I discussed this with Raymond Mhlaba 20-odd years later, he said rather pragmatically, “Well, luckily we did not have to put it to the test.”

The warmth of Sweden

I really got to know Sweden after my release in 1985. I was in London, working in the ANC office. I was travelling all over Europe, America and Canada, speaking about our struggle. I was in and out of Sweden every few weeks it seemed, certainly every few months. I found it to be a country where to speak about South Africa was to be welcomed.

I felt that warmth again after Nelson Mandela was released. He was a guest at the official guesthouse. What a reception he got, what a welcome! There was such a great sense of triumph and to watch Nelson Mandela meet his old comrade, OR Tambo, whom he hadn’t seen for all these years, was very moving. I know that many other countries helped as well, but Sweden and Scandinavia played a leading role and I thank you all on behalf of us all.

Ahmed Kathrada, Defiance Campaign Trialist, Treason Trialist, Rivonia Trialist

First of all, this morning when we spoke to the trialists, we forgot to thank some people, especially our lawyers. It's never too late to thank them.

We didn't thank the people who provided the wonderful food. For those of you who don't know, the ladies who provided the food today, their mothers provided the food during the trial years, so thank you very much. Last but not least, the staff of the Foundation, thank you very much.

I met a very beautiful young lady [Bertha Gxowa] when we went to launch the Germiston branch of the ANC in 1950. We were organising the May 1 strike. She was 18, as she has now confessed. I made it a point of going to Germiston after that, at every opportunity. And we became good friends. I kept on going to Germiston, seeing this young lady. Then I got an invitation to her wedding, so I stopped going to Germiston. We met again at the Treason Trial.

Now you'll excuse me for just adding a few things about the Defiance Campaign Trial. One of the things the Defiance Trial will be remembered for in history is that during this trial, the South African court invented the term "statutory communist". Anybody could be a statutory communist if the court found you guilty of any offence, like speaking at a banned meeting. So communists and anti-communists and non-communists became statutory communists, and then they were exposed to banning orders.

The Defiance Trial arose out of the Defiance Campaign, which was the first time that a major campaign had been launched jointly by the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC). Madiba was the National Volunteer-in-Chief and his deputy

was Maulvi Cachalia from the SAIC.

The supporter who was really a spy

There was one chappy who used to work almost full-time in the office of the secretary-general, Walter Sisulu. He was always very useful, buying food for Walter and his staff, and when there was a social occasion, his little band provided lovely music. His name was Mr Makhanda, or that's how we knew him. The next time we met him was when he gave evidence in the trial. He had been a spy. He was actually Detective Sergeant Motloung or something, from Namibia.

The Freedom Charter was the main basis of the Treason Trial. The state tried to prove that it was a communist document, and that the accused were part of an attempt to violently overthrow the government of the country. They brought in a professor of politics at the University of Cape Town, Professor Murray, to give expert evidence on communism.

The professor who declared 'pure communism'



Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Nelson Mandela and Ahmed Kathrada

Prof Murray was given document after document, including a confiscated poster which said, "Soup with meat, soup without meat" [referring to food available at the Congress of the people]. Then the lawyers would ask him, "What do you say to this?" He would then classify each document as "communism" or "undiluted communism", etcetera. He was shown a document which he declared was "pure communism". It had been

written by [former National Party politician] Piet Koornhof, in his doctoral thesis at Oxford. So it carried on. They showed him another document. “Do you know who wrote this one?” they asked. “No, I don’t,” was his reply, “but it is ‘pure communism.’” “Do you know who wrote it?” they asked, and when he replied that he didn’t, they promptly informed him “You wrote it!”

A fake leader of the ANC

To prove that these were violent accused, they brought their star witness, a Mr Solomon Ngobose, to court one day. That day the court was full of high-ranking police officials and ambassadors. Our lawyers knew nothing of what was happening. Ngobose claimed that he was the Secretary of the ANC in the Eastern Cape. He said he was Secretary on September 18, 1952, when Walter Sisulu and Dr Letele ordered him to start a riot in New Brighton, in which some people were killed. The comrades from the Eastern Cape, about 10 of them, were all wondering, “Who the hell is this chap?”

Then the court adjourned and people on the side of the defence were looking for information about the witness. When the court resumed after a week or two, Vernon Berrangé led the cross-examination. I remember Vernon saying, “Solomon Ngobose, I tell you that you’re a cheat, a liar, a thief, a murderer, a rapist – what have you got to say to that now

that all these police are here?” Ngobose denied all of that. Berrangé continued, “I put it to you that on September 18, when you claim you led the riot, you were serving a prison sentence in Durban, where you wrote a letter to an advocate. This is the letter.” All the police and the ambassadors started leaving court.

Batteries in a bun

Then the state of emergency, of course, was 1960, and we were all in prison. That is the time when the ANC and the PAC were declared illegal. We didn’t have newspapers, but Bram Fischer smuggled in a little radio and Helen Joseph hid batteries in the bun of her hair to keep us supplied.

At a certain stage we dismissed our lawyers and conducted our own case. This allowed us to get in a typewriter. We also demanded consultations. In those days you couldn’t consult with whites in a black prison, and especially not a woman, but we demanded Helen Joseph as our witness. We also called Leon Levy to consult with us. The prison officials had to set up a barrier to keep Leon and Helen Joseph separate, so that they wouldn’t break their own decency rules. If Helen wanted to speak to Leon, she had to get up and talk through the little hole in the barrier. We were sitting on the other side, separated by a no-man’s-land space; we could see them both.

Per Wästberg, Swedish anti-apartheid activist

In this confused and murky world of ours, it is good to meet combatants for justice and racial equality and to reflect on what was and what could have been.

My involvement with the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) began in 1960 after I was expelled from Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique and South Africa because of my writings on racism and my contacts with the liberation movements. In Johannesburg, I interviewed Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo. Returning to Sweden, I started a fund for the



victims of racial oppression in South Africa and got top politicians and intellectuals to sign a manifesto.

The beginnings of the Swedish Anti-Apartheid Movement

It developed into the Swedish South Africa Committee and the Swedish Anti-Apartheid Movement, and the fund itself became the Swedish Defence and Aid Fund, sister body to the British Defence and Aid, the creation of Canon John Collins of St Paul's in London. In 1965 it was transformed into IDAF and outlawed by the South African regime.

Canon Collins' involvement started with the Treason Trial of 1956 – the charge of high treason carrying the death penalty. Bishop Ambrose Reeves' fund processed about R25-million over the next few years, most of it for defence costs and two thirds of it from Collins.

To fund the defence at the Rivonia Trial in 1963, he persuaded artists like Pablo Picasso and Henry Moore to donate works for an auction at Christie's. Over R6-million was raised, and thanks to the defence lawyers and the international outcry, no death sentences were passed.

The United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa started in 1965 with a Swede as permanent chairman. Two thirds of the donations to that fund went to IDAF. Uniquely, recipients' names were not published, for security reasons, in the UN annual report.

In his book *White Lies*, Denis Herbstein describes Sweden as “the world's most generous underwriter of Africa's non-violent struggle”.

“Without the Swedish connection,” he wrote, “numerous nationalist movements would have been much less effective in their wars of liberation. And Defence and Aid would have remained a domestic do-good fund. Fortunately, by the end of the 1950s, Sweden was searching for a role in the wider world. It was in a suitable mood to have its conscience pricked by a journalist.” Since the journalist was me, I will not quote further.

Sweden and South Africa

The Nelson Mandela Foundation thanks the Embassy of Sweden for its role in helping to bring together these surviving former trialists. Sweden's support to the anti-apartheid movement started in the 1960s and grew over the next decades to involve a range of actors, from governmental and political parties to churches, student organisations, and trade unions. At the time of the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, the Swedish government had disbursed some 2.5-billion Swedish kronor (in current figures, approximately \$350-million) to the South African liberation struggle. The Swedish government was the ANC's main donor in the non-military field.



Anders Möllander, the Swedish Ambassador to South Africa, and the Swedish delegation meet Nelson Mandela

Olof Palme becomes involved in fighting apartheid

But one person who read my book about apartheid, *On the Black List*, was Olof Palme – the charismatic politician, who was not yet prime minister. He committed himself to fighting racism and injustice.

Indeed, we were several who started campaigns which led the government to stop using anything made in South Africa and shops from selling South African imports like fruit and wine.

Freedom fighters were invited to Sweden and treated as men and women engaged in a just war. Oliver Tambo came to Sweden in 1962, was on national television, saw the government and returned almost every year.

Collins came in 1961 and I introduced him to many of the leading figures in Swedish political life, including Palme; and he was uniquely trusted.

I acted as a go-between for Sweden, IDAF and the ANC. Palme told me that since there were no open accounts and no auditors for the millions in taxpayers' money transferred from Sweden to IDAF and directly or indirectly to the ANC, I had to guarantee that no money went into the wrong cupboards. It was only after many years that Sida took over with auditors who had to swear oaths.

The 'turbulent priest'

IDAF had to work in the shadows to get things done. So it was underestimated, sometimes mistrusted. Yet its significance was immense. While acronyms are abstract and soon forgotten, the actions of John Collins, in the framework of his fund, remind us that change is always possible, that dictatorial silence can be broken and propaganda and hypocrisy revealed as lies.

I remember how in 1965 Collins urged the UN to initiate political action on a big scale, for "only external pressures and the threat or execution of internal revolution will bring about the desired result". Such a passionate speech had not yet been heard inside the UN.

Collins had a restless energy and a sense of urgency: his own life was running out, but worse were the years of wasted life of the South African political prisoners, of the banned and detained, of the children denied education. Peace not based on freedom, justice and human rights for all is merely a buying of time, he said.

He and I became close friends. He relished being called the "turbulent priest". He had an appetite for action and swift decisions, a loathing of indifference and compromise.

He and I went every year to banks in Zürich to set up alibi funds, with names like Freedom from Fear, Freedom from Hardship, Freedom from Hunger. Under solemn portraits on mahogany walls, we changed



Reggie September, his wife Melissa Steyn and the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Sahn Venter

account numbers and signed papers. In 1970 Collins gave me the codes and keys to the safe in Zürich in case anything happened to him. It was a solemn moment of trust.

I think that besides Joe Slovo, he was the most hated man in white South Africa. He preached against apartheid in St Paul's, and through IDAF his spirit was present at every trial and in every prison cell in South Africa. The IDAF-funded trials put South Africa in the dock and into the limelight.

Thabo Mbeki, Albie Sachs and Dennis Brutus were among those I met for the first time at his office in Amen Court. Collins had friends all over Africa: Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Seretse Khama, Desmond Tutu. But he was unknown to the many thousands that he helped to survive. His monument, said Father Trevor Huddleston, is not the plaque in St Paul's crypt, but the lives of millions of Africans who never met him.

When Collins was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, few knew what he had been doing. As late as 1987, IDAF funded a conference in Harare on South Africa's imprisoned and tortured children. It was the first time that ordinary people from South Africa, most of them black mothers, had met the ANC leadership in exile.

Thousands of wives and sometimes husbands and their children waited for their loved ones to return from prison and exile. IDAF devised a safe system for providing basic sustenance for these families, in many cases over decades – for the children's school fees, for the annual visit to Robben Island, for food and clothing. Detection of

this clandestine business would have meant immense suffering. The essence of IDAF work relied on not being found out.

Courage of the lawyers

I must stress the courage of the lawyers at the receiving end, since they were forbidden to accept funds from a banned organisation. Some 170 attorneys and over 80 advocates risked their freedom if the Special Branch had unveiled the tricks devised by IDAF. Thanks to their ingenuity, the gallows were replaced by life imprisonment for many.



George Bizos

When IDAF closed in 1991, no financial scandal of any kind had compromised the many years of work. The staff were the most dedicated imaginable. Many in this country today – Kader Asmal, Abdul Minty – could bear witness.

Half of the R1-billion that IDAF smuggled into South Africa came from Swedish sources and a fifth came from what Sweden channelled via the UN Trust Fund for South Africa.

Beyers Naudé, the South African priest who spent eight years under house arrest, said during the political negotiations in 1992: “The psychological and emotional effect of the Swedish support for millions of South Africans who fought during many years without support from the outer world has been immeasurably great. Sweden is the country that through different channels contributed most to the fight for freedom and justice in South Africa. The great majority of people in South Africa have no idea how all this happened or that Sweden was behind it.”

Raymond Suttner, in prison for 11 years, said in 1999 that Swedish support “nourished our moral, political and personal beliefs in a just cause ... The solidarity movement, from letters of support to concerts held to advance our cause, strengthened our resolve to win our freedom ... The Nordic involvement had the advantage of demonstrating that some Western powers recognised the legitimacy of struggles for national liberation. Nordic prime ministers met the leaders of our liberation movement in 1962, 25 years before any major Western country or leader of the Soviet Union.”

End of quote, and end of me, with my gratitude for being allowed to participate in this nostalgic gathering of old freedom fighters who contributed so much to changing the face of the world.

Birgitta Karlström Dorph, Swedish diplomat and anti-apartheid activist

It is a great honour to have the opportunity to say something about my work here in South Africa – over 20 years ago. And it is an honour to speak to such special people.

I came to the Swedish Legation in Pretoria in 1982 and left in 1988. It was not a proper embassy, because of our bad relations with

the South African government. A new wave of resistance had arisen. Organisations were coming up like flowers all over. The United Democratic Front (UDF) was founded in 1983. As resistance grew more active and hardened,





Zindzi Mandela-Hlongwane, Birgitta Karlström Dorph and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela

the government intensified repression. Confrontation was sharpened. The situation was very tense.

The challenge of extending support

My assignment was to extend support inside the country to the resistance. My job was to locate organisations which were representing the people and which we could support. We wanted to bring humanitarian assistance and relief to the oppressed people, so that they could participate in bringing about fundamental changes. It was not easy. One of my first tasks was to deal with the aftermath of the International University Exchange Fund scandal, an organisation we had supported and which had been infiltrated by agents of the South African government.

How did I know it was the right people and organisations I met? The first week I met with Beyers Naudé. During all those years I was here, Beyers regularly shared his knowledge and wisdom with me. Through him, the contact net was expanded. A mutual relationship takes time, and sometimes there was not so much time. I made a point of being visible in many circumstances – meetings, funerals and the like. I tried to find out where we could be of help and fit in. You were my teachers; it was through you that I learned how to do things. It was your decisions I relied on.

In one sense, it became easier with time because I got to know and understand more, but it also became more and more difficult for South Africans to work. Constant changes had to be made. The situation was tightened. It became more difficult to transfer money to the organisations here. The state of emergency was declared in the mid-1980s that gave the security police draconian powers: torture, disappearances and assassinations became even more widespread. Repression was tremendous. There were political trials. At the same time, it was vital that we avoided things that were outright illegal. When the Kagiso Trust came into existence in 1986, it made the work easier.

Building partnerships

Practically, what did I do? I asked for plans and budgets and descriptions. I studied, consulted a lot and forwarded requests to the government agency Sida in Stockholm. They had a decision-making process set up especially for this assistance. But it was not the Swedish government that was working with the organisations here; it was the whole Swedish family of NGOs. We had – and still have – a vast network of NGOs, political and less political. They became the partners of the organisations here. They received the money from Sida and then in various ways sent it here. In that way many people from all walks of life in Sweden got involved in assisting the resistance. There was tremendous interest and engagement in Sweden. People like

Per Wästberg were very important for that engagement. Partnerships were built.

The family of organisations we supported here was multifaceted: civics, legal aid, trade unions, churches, education, students, youth, women, media, the arts. It was important to support a variety of your work here. Of course, the organisations did not want to be dependent on outside funding. We on our side did not have any conditional ties whatsoever. Silent funding was also vital. We also had what we called scholarships – eventually nearly 300. This was money that went directly to politically active individuals so that they could do their work. If an organisation was declared “affected” so that it could not receive money from abroad, the set-up was modified. I should also mention that we sometimes acted as a go-between for organisations inside and outside, for example the UDF and the ANC.

No bags of dollars

I did not handle any money directly – no bags of dollars over the border or the like. Organisations and banks in many countries were the vehicles. We at the legation had our diplomatic pouch and also a safe and quick way to communicate in writing with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which then saw to it that the communication was transferred to the right partner.

I learned from people here that, from a security point of view, limited knowledge was not bad. When an organisation reported things were done or that more money was needed, I

asked for accounts. I tried to visit and see and talk to people involved. I wanted to make as sure as possible that money was spent in a way that the organisation had planned or in line with its broad aim. We did not want to exercise any control of the funds beyond the generally accepted reporting and accounting procedures. Great flexibility was needed. The situation was constantly changing.



Cleopas Nsibandé

Our main worry was that I was dealing with somebody who was working for the South African government or with an organisation that had been infiltrated. Not many things went wrong, at least to my knowledge.

When I left in 1988 the situation was different: the light could be seen over the horizon and there was a new type of work for the Swedish officials here. At that time we had come to support at least 400 organisations inside the country. There was more Swedish money to the resistance inside than outside. The network was established.

Shared values

How come it worked? We took risks sometimes. On both sides, we were lucky and also clever. But there was something else underlying it all. I think that we share a common disposition – emotional as well as ideological. We believe in self-determination. We share values of freedom, human rights, democracy, peace and justice. You understood that we did not have an agenda of our own. It was up to you South Africans to define where and how you wanted to go. That was not our issue.

I thank you for giving me the honour of sharing in part of your struggle. It has enriched my life tremendously. It was a school for life.

The 1956 Treason Trial

The 156 men, women and a newspaper charged with high treason in December 1956 for their efforts to end apartheid came from across racial and class spectrums in South Africa. In what became a marathon political trial, 65 had the charges against them withdrawn by January 1958; of the 91 who were indicted for trial in Pretoria, 61 were acquitted in April 1959 and the last group of 30, of which Mr Mandela was a part, were found not guilty on March 29, 1961.

Christian Åhlund, Swedish lawyer and anti-apartheid activist

It's difficult to express the mixed emotions of pride and humility that I feel to be here today, amongst so many hard-core subversives at this historical event.

I will try to present some observations from the perspective of a foreign lawyer on these issues that we are covering today.

There were several factors contributing to the success of the legal aid programme. South Africa under apartheid was, as far as authoritarian, undemocratic, repressive regimes go, unusual, in the sense that it was also by and large a legalistic society.

Good lawyers made a difference

Good lawyers could and did make a difference. This was not the case in contemporary regimes like Chile, Argentina or the Soviet Union.

The outcome of the Treason Trial is an illustration of the role good lawyers and, occasionally, good judges could play, even under apartheid. In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela writes that the acquittal was "largely as a result of a superior defence team and the fair-mindedness of the panel of these particular judges".

Mandela goes on to say: "The court system, however, was, perhaps the only place in South Africa where an African could possibly receive a fair hearing and where the rule of law might still apply."



There was a space for the use of law in the liberation struggle and against the oppression. But it cost money, and that is where Canon John Collins, IDAF, Per Wästberg, the ingenious schemes that were concocted in London and the various networks came in. I've read somewhere that the total amount of money that was channelled into South Africa between the mid-1960s and 1990 was £100-million. It's obviously a very impressive operation that IDAF conducted.

I'm proud to have played a small part in that scheme. I was one of the lawyers who channelled money through our law firm. By using the lawyer-client privilege, we destroyed the scent for the police or others who tried to investigate where the money came from.

The legal struggles under apartheid created lawyers in South Africa whose quality is difficult to match anywhere in the world. Names like Arthur Chaskalson, George Bizos, Richard Goldstone and Pius Langa are known today far beyond the borders of South Africa.

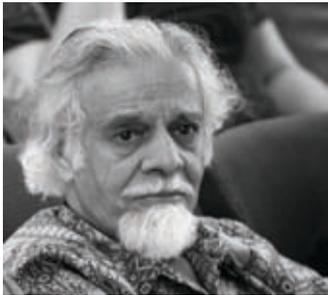
It was impressive to see, after the fall of apartheid, how many of the bright legal



minds were drafted from NGO service into government service and into high international positions. The jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court of South Africa has had an influence way beyond South Africa.

Looking back at this great partnership between South Africa and Sweden and its impressive and long-term effects, we ask ourselves whether and how we can replicate it today.

‘Barefoot lawyers’ can improve access to justice for the poor



Mosie Moolla

One of the great challenges in South Africa and the rest of Africa is to improve access to justice for the poor. One tool is what is called paralegals or “barefoot lawyers”. They fulfil a dual function, as advisors to the grassroots and as links between the grassroots and the judicial systems. When the concept functions properly, paralegals will sort out issues, in the country village for example, by solving or mediating such problems that are less complicated and forwarding more complicated problems to lawyers and courts.

I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that South Africa is the world leader in this field. Here, paralegal clinics have existed for many years already. The concept of paralegals is also catching on in other African countries. But when the concept is first introduced, it almost always meets with resistance from the legal profession. Lawyers and judges are highly sceptical. Lawyers are afraid that they will lose business if barefoot lawyers come in and compete with them. This is a resistance that has to be overcome.

I have an interesting example of the role that South Africa can play, and has played already, in promoting the concept of paralegals across the continent.

Liberia is one of the countries where my organisation, the International Legal Assistance Consortium, is active. When we first tried to introduce the concept of paralegals, there was strong resistance. We decided to bring a delegation of Liberian lawyers and judges to South Africa. We demonstrated to them how it functions and that helped them change their minds. They realised that the concept would

actually increase their business instead of competing with them.

Building the rule of law essential

But this is not the only area where South African experience could be useful in building justice in other African countries and beyond. An increasingly important aspect of international development work today is to build the rule of law, particularly in post-conflict countries.

I’m talking about drafting constitutions, building the institutions of justice, training judges and establishing bar associations. This is definitely an area where lawyers from South Africa and from the Scandinavian countries can work together again. In fact, we’re already off to a good start on such co-operation. A couple of years ago the governments of Sweden and South Africa, together with Unifem, which is the UN gender agency, and the International Legal Assistance Consortium established a partnership for gender justice, with the purpose of using the law as a tool to improve the situation of women in post-conflict countries.

And a year ago, almost to the day, the South African Ministry of Justice hosted a conference organised by this partnership for gender justice in Cape Town and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs sponsored it. This conference brought together the ministers of justice and gender from 12 African countries.

South African lawyers have an important international role

Under the umbrella of the International Legal Assistance Consortium, which is based in Stockholm and works with generous financial support from the Swedish government, the Scandinavian bars are already working together with lawyers of a number of countries, in projects to bring the rule of law to countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Haiti. I already mentioned Liberia, but there are many other countries in Africa where this kind of support is needed and lawyers with a South African background and the South African quality have an important part to play.

Such international and regional co-operation could become a worthy follow-up to the successful co-operation that we established long ago, during the South African liberation struggle.

Questions and comments from the floor

Joe Matthews, Treason Trialist

I saw Arthur Chaskalson leaving just now and I was relieved because he and I once had a conversation about the past.



Joe Matthews

One of the issues that we raised was whether those of us who had possession of secrets were entitled, simply because we are still alive, to reveal them, without the permission of those who have departed. He raised that issue and it's quite pertinent.

I was fascinated by some of the remarks, first of all about Sweden. I was thinking of a dear colleague of ours in Sweden, who operated in the Foreign Affairs Department, in a dingy office, who was the main link between Sweden and the International Defence and Aid Fund, and that was Ms Ethel Ringborg. She was a fantastic woman. I worked with her and she later became the Swedish Ambassador to Botswana. But you wonder, should you talk about some of the things you did with Ms Ringborg?

I also was thinking about the role of Russia, the Soviet Union. It was the complement, in my opinion, to the role that Sweden was playing in the Western world. Don't think we never discussed Sweden at the highest level of the Soviet Union, because when we said, as the ANC, "We would like you to contribute funds to the struggle," one of the replies of the top people in the Soviet Union was, "We may supply you with AK47s but if you want funds, you have to go to Sweden."

There has been a mention of Khrushchev. I knew Khrushchev and the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. Our first guerrillas were sent to China and Andrew Mlangeni (I see he's sitting here) was one of them. This was arranged through Deng Xiaoping, who at that time was secretary general of the Communist Party of China, and later was purged and came back to introduce the reforms which are making China now one of the most developed countries in the world.

But the role of Sweden was recognised even in those circles as a special role and I don't think we have really been able to analyse the impact of Sweden's assistance, not only to liberation movements, but through the World Bank to development in the African countries as they became independent.

The South African struggle has been, and still is, an extremely complex one, particularly the international dimension. I could mention India. The importance of India is one that we often underestimate.

Ben Turok, Treason Trialist

I must say I learned a great deal from our Swedish friends this afternoon, a great deal I never knew. I'm very grateful, too.

On Monday I have a meeting with parliamentary colleagues from Europe to discuss Europe/Africa relations. I've been engaged in this kind of dialogue for some time, and recognising how poor it is compared to what you told us, I'm going to say to them on Monday that it's time that people of goodwill and good intent, in Europe, like yourselves, should uncover themselves. We must get past the diplomatic hurdles and begin to unravel people-to-people relations, which are rather like what you have described.

This dialogue has been a memorable experience. In South Africa today, we are fumbling a little with the way forward. We need to recover the values and spirit which drove the struggles in the days of the Treason Trial. This meeting today has helped me reinforce where I come from and where we need to go.

**Horst Kleinschmidt,
past executive director,
International Defiance
and Aid Campaign for
Southern Africa, London,
and anti-apartheid activist**

One of the most important milestones in all of this was what happened in the mid-1980s, which was when the struggle escalated and we suddenly found, not hundreds, but 30 000 people in detention, all of whom potentially faced trial.

It was then necessary to go to Sweden and to other countries for funding, to pay for lawyers to represent them, both before they were charged and subsequently. The number of people in detention increased tenfold within the space of two or three years.

With the constraints on how to report on this, I remember going to Stockholm and having to address a committee of parliamentarians, and I was carefully briefed about how I was to put my words because there were those who were very much in the know and those who were less in the know, and confidence had to be conveyed nevertheless that the monies were well spent.

As we needed more lawyers, there were also more scoundrels, and so it happened, for example, that a particular lawyer introduced himself to us in London and said he would happily represent a number of people in detention. He also, at the same time, went and presented himself to the ANC and told them

The 1952 Defiance Campaign Trial

Twenty activists including Nelson Mandela, Nthato Motlana and Ahmed Kathrada were tried in August 1952 for their parts in the Defiance Campaign against unjust laws. They were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. That December all 20 were convicted and sentenced to nine months in jail with hard labour, suspended for three years.



Reggie September and Arthur Chaskalson

that he was willing to be a member of the ANC and work for the ANC. A little while later I was visited by a senior official in the ANC who said to me, "He's come here two or three times now and he's unfortunately compromised. He has admitted that there is severe pressure being put on him and he's working on the other side. He doesn't want to, but he is. We must cut him out." I cut him out, as a result of which he went to the PAC. I still wouldn't fund him. I remember members of the PAC arriving in my office and threatening to throw me out of the window for not funding him, but I couldn't tell them what I knew.

Another lawyer, who was hoping to make much more money than he was due out of a case, arranged for my arrest when I eventually returned to this country.

There was also the case of Craig Williamson, who had used International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) money and sent it to lawyers in this country and then went to our common donors, in this case notably the Danish government, and said, "IDAF is inefficient. It takes far too long to get money there, and thus I have channelled

this money. Can we now arrange for the IDAF money to go to the IUEF?”

In our minds, it was a case of us already suspecting Williamson, and he was suggesting that our money should be used via the IUEF. Fortunately, it only took another two months and he was exposed in the media for being a spy.

There were other very difficult moments, such as when staff members who worked for me resigned, and a few months later were found serving imprisonment in South Africa. The headlines in South Africa said, “IDAF is the recruiting ground for [the ANC’s armed wing] MK.” Some donors were worried about that.

Tor Sellström, researcher and author

When I did the write-up of the Swedish history and the Swedish involvement in Southern Africa, I was very impressed by the early generation.



Lorna Levy and Billy Nair

It is incredible. We are talking about an era when there were no emails and no SMSs, no telephones, but still there were close links between the North and the South. They are not there in the same way anymore, in the people-to-people way.

South Africa also has, when it comes to the historiography of the anti-apartheid struggle, both nationally and internationally, very good initiatives. A couple of years ago, President Thabo Mbeki launched the South Africa Democracy Education Trust (Sadet), which

has published two volumes on the struggles in the 1960s and the 1970s. Within a short time there will be huge volumes, about 1 000 pages each, on the international dimensions of the struggle. I have contributed a chapter on the Nordic countries. Vladimir Shubin is writing on the Soviet Union and the European countries. There are chapters on India, chapters on China, etcetera.

On April 11-12, 2008, there is a conference in Stockholm about modern solidarity. How can we learn from the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and the anti-colonial struggles in Southern Africa? Sweden was very much involved with the struggles in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia also. How can we replicate this, and on that basis recreate this kind of solidarity? South Africa will be represented by a number of prominent persons: Frank Chikane from the Presidency, Minister Pallo Jordan and others. I hope that that will be some sort of take-off for a revitalised solidarity between the North and the South.

Karina van Wyk, journalist, *Beeld* newspaper

I have a question for Mr Goldberg. You said that the trialists created the opportunity to build a democratic South Africa but we’re not quite there yet.

I want you to elaborate on that and tell us what you think can be done by politicians and by citizens to ensure there’s a democratic South Africa.

Kesval Moonsamy, Treason Trialist

Comrade chair, I don’t think it will be out of place to once again express our sincere thanks for the unqualified support which

Sida and the Swedish people rendered to the ANC.

Why do we think Sida gave such tremendous support to the ANC? There were other organisations in South Africa, but they threw their full weight behind us for one reason, and that was the Freedom Charter, and the fact that the leadership was committed to non-racialism in South Africa.

Andrew Mlangeni, Rivonia Trialist

Comrade Joe Matthews here has already disclosed without my permission that I was one of the first people to be sent to China for military training by the ANC.



Andrew Mlangeni, Nelson Mandela and John Nkadameng

I'm not going to ask a question but merely, like Comrade Kay [Kesval Moonsamy] here, to say that we thank the Swedish people, in particular Sida.

I have, since the unbanning of the ANC, been associated with Sida. I was heading the Transport Department of the ANC, and for many years before we went into parliament, I was handling the funds for purchasing motor vehicles for the ANC, and Sida was pouring large amounts of money into our coffers for the purchase of vehicles, to enable us to travel throughout the country, organise, form regions and supply our operatives with motor vehicles. Without Sida, I don't think we would have been able to organise the country into what it is today.

Denis Goldberg, Rivonia Trialist

I wish I could spend a couple of days answering Karina van Wyk's question.

I meant simply that it takes a long time to transform a country from an authoritarian dictatorship with brutal laws into one in which the democracy is fully realised and experienced by all our people.

One of the worst legacies of apartheid, in my view, and I worked as an advisor to two ministers in the Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry and experienced it first hand, is the problem of not having a civil service trained, experienced, with energy and integrity, to carry through policies.

We have a civil service where, on average, 30% of top management posts are unoccupied in all departments. In the Department of Health it is over 40%.

One of the things apartheid left us was a civil service which had served the needs of 5.5-million whites and a few million workers around them in the formal economy, and had sustained a police and military occupation and dictatorship over the rest of our population. We now need a government to develop and implement policies for 48-million people or more.

This is a job that is going to take, in my opinion, a generation or two. But we've achieved a tremendous amount. Children have grants, adults have pensions. This has transformed the possibilities of life for millions of people in South Africa. There's also an economic boom. Kids go to school who would never have gone to school before.

I would like to see the selflessness that we've heard about. The Swedish people poured a billion rand into our country, semi-legally, and can find almost no cases of money disappearing into the wrong hands. What an achievement of selflessness, of integrity. I would like us to recapture, as a whole society, the high ground so that, with our few people who are trained and experienced, we could achieve more in a shorter time.

Motsamai Mpho, Treason Trialist

I am from Botswana. I came to South Africa to work on the mines in 1948, and I joined the ANC while I was working at Crown Mines as assistant welfare officer.

I am thankful that the Foundation has been able, through the assistance of the Swedish people and government, to bring us here today to remember what we did in the past.

When I was a youth in the ANC, in 1952, I bought a bag from the East Rand Leather Works. I carried newspapers in that bag which said something about the liberation of the people of South Africa. And I carried the *New Age of Liberation* and *Fighting Talk* wherever I went. I have the bag in the hotel. When we became independent in Botswana, one of our ministers called me “New Age” because during his youth he was living in Sophiatown and saw me carrying this bag all the time.



Motsamai Mpho

From the founders of the ANC we inherited patience, determination and non-violence, and I'm thankful for that; that we were taught not to be violent. I know one of the things that cost us was that we were so soft. But this softness has made us. We must carry on this country on those lines.

I'm so glad that we have had this moment to be here together and to see one of the leaders of Africa, Nelson Mandela, and to



The Levy brothers

speak to him at his age. This has been a great moment for us, the people of South Africa who have been in the struggle. It is God's blessing to have had a leader who will never forget the fellow fighters. I hope we are going to inherit this type of leadership, where you will never forget everyone who took up arms to help you develop the country.

Achmat Dangor, CEO, Nelson Mandela Foundation

All of you have enriched our lives today.

We have seen people here who have been through all kinds of struggles. The younger generation especially seem to have moved from euphoria to despair in 15 short years without thinking that other countries had to spend many generations to achieve the liberation that we did. It is not yet time to despair.

This has been a very invigorating but long day. I want to thank our panellists for their contributions. One last plug for the Centre of Memory at the Foundation: Comrade Joe, Horst and all the others, give us your secrets, we will look after them. We believe this history needs to be preserved and mustn't be locked up in your wonderful minds. Thank you very much, all of you.

Trialists in attendance



Ayesha "Bibi" Dawood
Treason Trial,
Rivonia Trial



Suliman Esakjee
Treason Trial



Jennifer Friedman
Representing
Jacqueline Arenstein,
Treason Trial



Denis Goldberg
Rivonia Trial



Bertha Gxowa
Treason Trial



Ahmed Kathrada
Defiance Trial,
Treason Trial,
Rivonia Trial



Leon Levy
Treason Trial



Norman Levy
Treason Trial



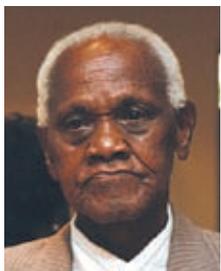
Henry Makgothi
Treason Trial



Nelson Mandela
Defiance Trial,
Treason Trial,
Rivonia Trial



Joe Matthews
Treason Trial



Elliot Mfaha
Treason Trial



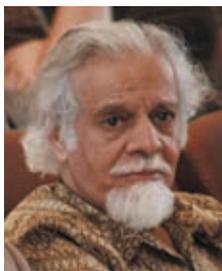
Andrew Mlangeni
Rivonia Trial



Nthato Motlana
Defiance Trial



Motsamai Mpho
Treason Trial



Mosie Moolla
Treason Trial



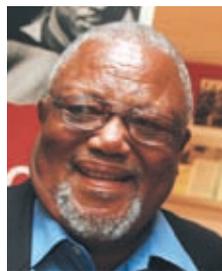
Kay Moonsamy
Treason Trial



Dr Ike Moosa
Treason Trial



Billy Nair
Treason Trial



John Nkadimeng
Treason Trial



Peter Nthite
Treason Trial



Cleopas Nsibande
Treason Trial



Reggie September
Treason Trial



Ben Turok
Treason Trial

General reflections

Murphy Morobe

Murphy Morobe, former activist and chief executive officer of Kagiso Media, said, “The dialogue is significant as it engages different generations of South Africa. It is important for recalling our history. It is also very important for younger people to understand where the country comes from, especially because these kinds of people and their contributions leave us with a legacy of what it means to be humble. And what it means to give of yourself for the betterment of society as a whole. I’m much younger, but I thought I want to be in the midst of it because there is something in it that I can still absorb.”

Anders Möllander

Anders Möllander, Swedish Ambassador to South Africa, said, “We got invigorated, the trialists got invigorated. There are very few people in Sweden who knew about the funding [provided to those fighting in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa] because of the secrecy that was required, and there are few of the trialists who knew about it either. While the Swedish people did not support the Treason and Rivonia trials because they were far too early, there is a clear link with later trials, when Sweden helped.”

Peter Nthite

Peter Nthite, a Treason Trialist, said, “I was very grateful to meet my old comrades today. Nothing could have been more exciting. I thought all features of today were successful, but the last bit [the dialogue] was the most important. It was exciting to get insight into how hard people worked to negotiate our success.”

Achmat Dangor

Achmat Dangor, chief executive officer of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, said, “If you take people like this who have been through struggles we are only going to read about, you

don’t find the same sense of despair as in the younger generation. I think the difference is patience – these people are used to persevering, while the succeeding generations are less patient.”

Verne Harris

Verne Harris, Memory Programme Manager at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, said, “I was surprised by the resilience of the veterans. They participated fully after a very long day. There’s been fabulous camaraderie here, but what impressed me most about the dialogue is it wasn’t about self-congratulation – there was some serious reflection and self-criticism.”

Kesval “Kay” Moonsamy



Kenhari Moonsamy, Nelson Mandela and Kay Moonsamy

Kesval “Kay” Moonsamy, a Treason Trialist and ANC member of Parliament, said, “It was an important gathering; it brought former trialists together and it was recalling the past. It was an interesting development in the transformation of our society. This gathering is also an inspiration to all freedom-loving and peace-loving South Africans. The Treason Trial was democracy on trial, it was the Freedom Charter on trial.”



Jennifer Friedman, Nelson Mandela and Essop Jassat

Ayesha “Bibi” Dawood

Ayesha “Bibi” Dawood, a Treason Trialist, said, “I am very happy that we met again after so many years. I’ve met people I haven’t seen in 53 years.”

Max Sisulu

Max Sisulu, son of anti-apartheid icons Walter and Albertina Sisulu, said, “I thought it was an opportunity to look back at the past and at the relationships between the Nordic people, the Swedes and us. The food and stuff they helped us with. They helped build schools; I had an opportunity to study in Sweden. It’s a good relationship and I hope it will continue to make South Africa what it is today, a truly democratic country.”

Paulos Tesfagiorgis

Paulos Tesfagiorgis, senior advisor to Democracy and Constitution Building Africa, said, “For me it’s moving, a bit emotional because I also come from a struggle background in Eritrea. I like the way they are just giving their testimony, with humanity and humility, and trying to put it within the present South African context. I also envy them because in other countries, we don’t see this kind of reflection going on, so it makes me emotional and envious.”

Motsamai Mpho

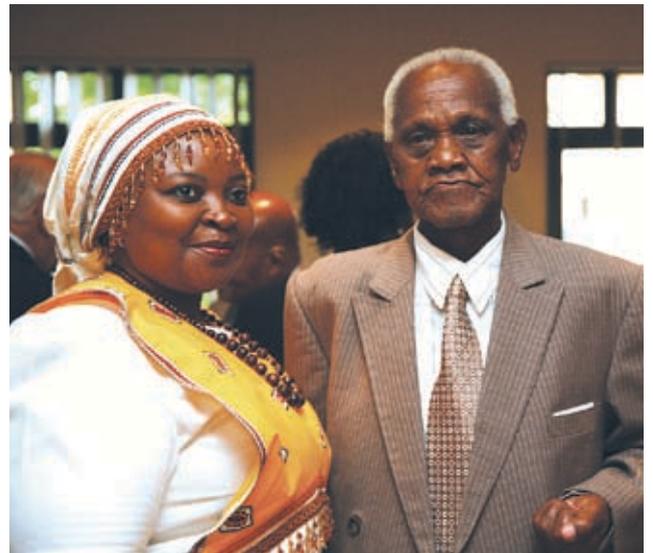
Motsamai Mpho, a Treason Trialist, said, “For me, being on trial was good, because finally, the government would have to tell

people what it was they perceived the ANC to be doing wrong. And finally, people would know what the ANC was doing and we as the trialists would finally get a chance to tell the country why we were doing what we were doing.”

Sibongile Mfafa

Sibongile Mfafa, daughter-in-law of Treason Trialist Nzimeni Elliot Mfafa, said, “As a civil

servant, I was touched by Mr Goldberg saying that the civil servants were almost failing the country. That gave me a jolt and I am now energised to do better. I wish that they [veterans] could teach us how to be like them, to be passionate, peace-loving and as determined.”



Sibongile Mfafa and Nzimeni Elliot Mfafa

Bertha Gxowa

Bertha Gxowa, a Treason Trialist, said, “This day meant so much to me, I wish we had thought of it long ago and done it more often. I haven’t seen some of these people in over 40 years and these are people, for a time, who were such a big part of my life and my work. I think it is important that we know where we come from and to take time to reflect on those beginnings.”

Reflections by Foundation staffers

The trialists' dialogue was an occasion that the Nelson Mandela Foundation staff will never forget, as these reflections show.



Yase Godlo

Yase Godlo, financial administrator

I spent an afternoon with the trialists touring Constitution Hill and stayed at the hotel with them. These are the people who made history; they are fascinating. I was amazed how much they remembered. For me, it was not the things I had already heard about that impressed me, but the recollections that had not been documented at all. Some of their stories you will not hear anywhere else. For example, we heard that OR Tambo had a choir and certain songs sung by the choir were secret messages between the prisoners. They also danced while in prison. Life was more than just being incarcerated.

Kay Moonsamy told a story about smuggling someone out of the prison and how they had to bribe a policeman. The prisoner's brother worked in a clothing shop, and organised a suit and clothes for the policeman to wear at his wedding, in return for helping his brother to escape. The trialists experienced so much emotion during this tour.

They listened to the guides relaying stories some of them had lived through. It

was an awesome experience. I was pleasantly surprised later to find out that Peter Nthite was in one of the books about Nelson Mandela. Everyone I met was unique. Billy Nair was so funny and friendly. I realised that these men and women who had done so much for the country were, at the end of the day, grandparents and parents – and that was humbling.

Joe Ditabo, property administrator

I was pushing Bibi Dawood around in a wheelchair as we toured Constitution Hill with the trialists. She is an amazing woman and her memory is astounding. She was very upset when she realised that the cell in which she had been kept was no longer there, having been removed during the restructuring of the jail. She did, however, remember exactly where it had been. She told us of how she was once sent to solitary confinement for eight days. When I saw the cell I couldn't believe that someone could have survived there for eight days!



Joe Ditabo

Everyone remembered having seen the others in different cells at the time they were arrested there. It's truly amazing for me as a young person that these old people seem to have a photographic memory of their lives. Looking around as we drove to the Constitutional Court, they remarked on the changes in the city. For instance, those who were from Botswana had not been back to South Africa since the end of their trial. I think

it was gratifying for them and their families to have been gathered together for this reunion. It meant that someone had not forgotten his or her contribution to the struggle for South Africa's freedom. It meant that they were recognised and thanked. Meeting the trialists was an honour and an experience like no other I have ever had in my life.

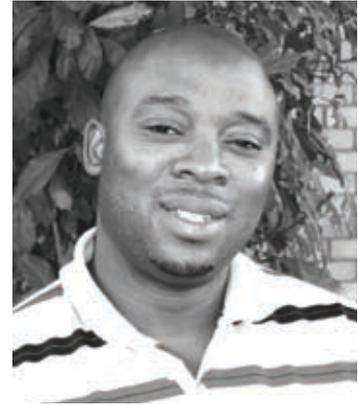
Luthando Peter, driver

I was one of the team of people picking up former trialists from the airport. Some of them came from Botswana, some from the Eastern Cape and Cape Town. When we picked them up from the airport we had to assist them with wheelchairs and drive them to the hotel.

There was one man there from the Eastern Cape, Nzimeni Elliot Mfafa. He was Xhosa-speaking, like Madiba. I felt honoured to meet him. He was quite talkative. We chatted the whole way between the airport and here. But there was nothing that was particularly

political, it was just general chatting.

The trialists said Mandela was untouchable. They said even the whites were afraid of him. If he said no, he meant no. He said "don't dare touch me" and they didn't. I realised that Mandela was always one of those dignified, strong people who meant whatever he said.



Luthando Peter

If the apartheid government wanted to kill him they could have. They could have injected him, or poisoned his water, or whatever. I think somewhere, somehow, in the back of their minds, they thought if they killed him there would be a riot in the whole country.



About the Nelson Mandela Foundation

Centre of Memory and Dialogue

The Nelson Mandela Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1999 to support its Founder's ongoing engagement in worthy causes on his retirement as President of South Africa. The Foundation is registered as a trust, with its board of trustees comprising prominent South Africans selected by the Founder. The Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Dialogue was inaugurated by Nelson Mandela on September 21, 2004, and endorsed as the core work of the Foundation in 2006. The Nelson Mandela Foundation, through its Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Dialogue, contributes to the making of a just society by promoting the vision and work of its Founder and convening dialogue around critical social issues.

Dialogue for Justice

The Dialogue Programme of the Centre of Memory and Dialogue aims to develop and sustain dialogue around Mr Mandela's legacy. It is committed to building on the history, experience, values, vision and leadership of its Founder to provide a non-partisan platform for public discourse on critical social issues. Achieving community participation in decision-making, even at policy levels, is prioritised.

The Dialogue Programme aims to perpetuate and re-invigorate the culture of engagement using the example set by Mr Mandela of inclusive and open dialogue for which South Africa is famous.

Drawing on the rich traditions of transformative dialogue, problem-solving and social renewal that made possible South Africa's remarkable transition, the Dialogue Programme:

- Aims to facilitate greater understanding and awareness about the problems faced by people, particularly in South Africa and Africa, and the possible solutions available to them

- Utilises comprehensive methodologies to promote dialogue between stakeholders
- Convenes result-oriented stakeholder dialogue on key social issues identified through continuous engagement with partners

Memory for Justice

Memory resources documenting the life and times of Nelson Mandela are to be found in an extraordinary range of locations, both within South Africa and internationally. The Memory Programme provides a unique facility which:

- Locates, documents and ensures the preservation of these scattered resources
- Collects and curates Mr Mandela's personal archive
- Promotes public access to these resources and fosters dialogue around them
- Ensures that all initiatives in the name of Nelson Mandela are true to his legacy

Memory is not an end in itself. Its significance lies in its use. The Memory Programme seeks to reach both global audiences and those systemically disadvantaged within South Africa by:

- Undertaking outreach programmes, including travelling exhibitions, books, a comic series, and internships
- Ensuring web-based access to information through its web portal
- Supporting digitisation initiatives designed to broaden access to resources
- Facilitating research by individuals and institutions

“We believe that the vehicle for sharing memory effectively, for growing it, and for engaging it in the promotion of justice, is dialogue. We actively open our memory work – on the life and times of Nelson Mandela, the events and the people he influenced or was influenced by – to debate and discussion, and we draw on this memory work in convening dialogue on critical social issues that present a threat to justice in society.”
– Verne Harris, *Memory Programme Manager*



NELSON MANDELA
FOUNDATION

Living the Legacy

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