South African Historical Journal

ISSN: 0258-2473 (Print) 1726-1686 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rshj20

The 'Indian Chap': Recollections of a South African Underground Trainee in Mao's China

Nandha Naidoo

To cite this article: Nandha Naidoo (2012) The 'Indian Chap': Recollections of a South African Underground Trainee in Mao's China, South African Historical Journal, 64:3, 707-736, DOI: 10.1080/02582473.2012.670509

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2012.670509

South African Historical Journal
Vol. 64, No. 3, September 2012, 707–736

UNISA university of south africa PRESS

Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

MEMOIR

The 'Indian Chap': Recollections of a South African Underground Trainee in Mao's China

NANDHA NAIDOO*

Abstract

Little is known about the first South African underground group sent for training in China in 1961 before the Sino-Soviet breakdown. As a member of that group, for over 50 years I have not spoken publicly about the experience but, at 79, feel obliged to overcome previous reticence in the interest of adding to our country's knowledge of its complex past. I outline here the personal and political environment that shaped my views on justice and freedom and the journey that took me, as a student from Natal to London, where I participated in early campaigning against apartheid, and from there to the Peoples' Republic of China. I describe joining Wilton Mkwayi in Prague and Raymond Mhlaba, Joe Gqabi and Patrick Mthembu in Beijing where Mao Zedong spoke with us. I give a detailed account of the training in radio communication and technology that I received with Andrew Mlangeni in Mukden/Shenyang. While disappearing from my family's radar, my mother died and I was unable to honour a commitment to my father. I describe how, on my return to South Africa, although not formally recruited to any organization, I took instructions conveyed through Mac Maharaj, mainly after the reconstitution of the High Command following the Rivonia Trial. My subsequent arrest, interrogation ('Rooi Rus' Swanepoel), and trial, ending in acquittal, were followed by escape to Botswana where I remained among South African refugees for a year before managing to reach exile in England. My narrative indicates a need to explore the tension between developing critical-thinking cadres and the demands of organizational discipline; and that between personal and political commitment.

Key words: Radio Communication /Military training in China; meeting Mao Zedong; Nandhagopaul Naidoo; arrest; interrogation; trial; judgement; Mac Maharaj

Interviewed soon after his release from Robben Island, Raymond Mhlaba, who had been sentenced to 'life' alongside Nelson Mandela and the other Rivonia Trialists, spoke of 'an Indian chap' who had joined the group that he had led out of the country in

*Email: nandha.naidoo@yahoo.co.uk

ISSN: Print 0258-2473/Online 1726-1686

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2012.670509
http://www.tandfonline.com

1961 for training in China.[1] I am that 'Indian chap'. I have never spoken publicly about being a member of the first group of six South Africans sent secretly by the liberation movement to the People's Republic of China. However, as the names of the six began to emerge in books, interviews and articles, where I am listed as 'Steve Naidoo', inaccurate details have appeared, including speculation about the group's meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong. Four of the group have died, leading me to think that I should record that piece of history, with my personal journey, before it is lost. I was the only trainee who did not belong either to the African National Congress – then open only to Africans – nor to the Indian Congress or South African Communist Party.

My youth

My parents were the children of indentured labourers who were recruited in India to work in the sugar cane plantations in Natal. Neither had any formal education but they were passionate about learning and their ambition was for all their children to be educated.

There were various other influences on my political outlook as I grew up. The most important was the absence of compulsion to adhere to any religious doctrine. We could make choices. We did not have to be mandated by our parents.

I loved a good argument and never missed an opportunity to debate with my father. The subject of our arguments did not matter. The words that laced my father's conversations were:

> I arrived naked and will depart naked
> I must make my life's journey without hurting or harming any one
> integrity ... diplomacy ... decency ... compassion ... kindness
> Revenge is a stupid idea.

He would also say that working for someone else did not make you rich but employing some one else to work for you did. You had to make money work for you.

Although neither he nor my mother had been to school, they had a deep attachment to learning and were determined that their nine children would all be educated. I recall my father and his friend and neighbour, Mr Suleman Tayob, going to Durban (a considerable distance in those days from where we lived in Stanger), at the end of each school year to buy school books for the next school year.

My father wanted to build a proper school to serve the local Indian community. A school committee was formed with my father giving two acres of land. Cement blocks were made but the school was never built because the local sugarcane farmers refused to commit from their earnings one penny per ton of sugar milled to pay for a teacher and maintain the building.

Instead, we received our early education in a timber-framed zinc-clad structure used to store fertiliser, and part used as a cowshed. Our teacher was a very kind man who never used a cane and who probably only had a few years of formal schooling himself.

1. R. Mhlaba, interview with Tomas Karis, Port Elizabeth, December 1989. University of the Witwatersrand Library (UWL), Historical Papers, Karis-Gerhart Collection 1964–1990, A2675, [Interviews: Reel 2, Folder 22]; R. Mhlaba, interview with Tomas Karis, Port Elizabeth, December 1989.

Amazingly, a substantial number of those educated by him went on to become teachers, doctors, and lawyers. Everyone who attended became literate in English. This was all accomplished without government help or contact with the resident English-speaking community.

I undertook my secondary education at the Indian High School in Stanger. The journey that I made with my sister and brother each morning involved walking a few miles to the bus stop from where we travelled a further ten miles by bus. The journey was repeated after school, leaving us no time to engage in after-school activities. However, waiting for the bus allowed plenty of time to become an expert in Guli Danda! This is a game played in India. You dig a small oval hole in the ground and place a small stick across the hole. You raise this little stick into the air with another long stick and wallop it before it falls to the ground.

Our parents also put emphasis on learning for its own sake. My mother would say, 'You can lose all your worldly possessions but no one can take your learning away from you'. If I ever complained about school, she would ask, 'For whose benefit do you think you are attending school?' I learnt from my mother that it was important to reflect, to look at yourself in the mirror and to keep under constant review the ideas and values you hold. As a young married woman, she had completely revised her attitude to caste after being offered food and assisted by a lower caste woman when she had been left hungry in hospital. However, my mother also advised me not to marry a European woman because 'she will always think she is superior to you'. In conversations at dinner, we ate together as a family, and I recall my parents questioning the Europeans' claim to pre-eminence. 'They are educated but all they have is the job at the factory. I have my farm to return to', my father said more than once. Self-taught, he had worked his way up from 'kitchen boy' to factory pan-boiler, to establishing and managing his own sugar farm.

Another influence came through playing with a Zulu child of my age. At school, I recall a teacher during a lesson on the Zulu wars saying that 'some European vagabonds were helping the Kaffirs'. However, another said, 'When the Europeans arrived they had the bible and the Africans had the land. Now, the Africans have the Bible and the Europeans have the land'.

I recall my mother's comment after listening to my conversation with a teacher friend (who was educated in English, a teacher and a member of the Zulu aristocracy). The detail of what we were talking about has faded from my memory, but I recall her saying after our guest had departed, 'You were talking about all the people and he was talking about African people'.

At school, I had the benefit of arguing with Kader Asmal who was in my class. He was well read, sported a Union Jack badge on his lapel and, as a schoolboy, was a great admirer of the British Empire. He would quote Churchill and I can still remember the words which I learned from him: 'I was not made first minister of the Crown to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire!' Everything that Kader said, I had to dispute. I found it great fun. In time, I came to think there might be something in my arguments and, as he got older, Kader Asmal changed his views and went on to make a considerable contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle in Ireland.

One of the early measures taken by The Nationalist Government was to pass the 'Asiatic Land Tenure Act' restricting the expansion of land ownership by Indians.

The response of Indians was to resist non-violently. Those who broke the law were arrested and made speeches from the dock. I recall reading, 'We are a civilised people and you can't treat us like this'. This got me thinking. Who is 'civilised' and who is 'uncivilised'? And why should they be treated differently? For some speakers, the message seemed to be that it was all right to discriminate against Africans but not us Indians. Although they did not speak as representatives, I think this put me off joining the Indian Congress.

University

At the University of Natal (Non-European Section), we resented being segregated. We had our lectures in the evening at Sastri College. Our library was filled with books cast off from the main university library which we were not allowed to use. Those of us who weren't working during the day used our time to discuss any topic that came up affecting our situation. I was also very lucky to be taught by Professor Leo Kuper. One of his papers which appeared in a South African academic journal, the title of which I cannot recall, made a particular impression on me. It had been written shortly after the Nationalist Party came to power and set out the thinking which informed the Nationalist Party's legislative programme, namely, that there was no place for people of colour in European society except to provide menial labour. The schooling provided for them must not encourage any hope of achieving equality of treatment and opportunity. There was also to be no contact between Europeans and people of colour as equals. Matters affecting Africans, Coloureds and Indians were to be dealt with as administrative rather than political. The problem for the Nationalist Party was whether they could have the benefits of a modern industrial economy without concomitant social changes. According to Kuper, they were placing almost a Marxist emphasis on the economic determinism of social change. The question he put to his students was whether the Nationalist government could succeed in accomplishing their objectives. He also held seminars on questions of development, something else that engaged me.

We also touched briefly on Karl Marx's contribution to sociology. Advances in technology will affect the way society produces and distributes the goods and services it requires, and this in turn will effect social change. I confess not to have read Karl Marx but the germ of an idea was sown in my mind, that the concept of apartheid and Christian Nationalism had to be challenged and that resistance could not be based on another nationalism; and, further, that resistance to apartheid had to be based on policies formulated after a study of the conditions prevailing in South Africa and not Europe.

At university, a fellow student, Edward Nichol, also contributed to my thinking by being an uncompromising critic when what I did or said was unacceptable. I must admit that he had the moral high ground. My friends included Elias Motala, a supporter of the Non-European Unity Movement who would become a teacher, as well as Mac Maharaj and Phyllis Naidoo, both of whom would become active in the underground. We had some contact with a few liberal white students and, on one occasion, we organised a camp meeting at my father's farm. The students attending were a microcosm of South African society and my father cooked for us. We also arranged a similar meeting on a beach, but generally segregation prevailed and we boycotted our segregated graduation ceremony.

After university, I taught for a brief period at an Indian school in Dundee. The number of children we had to teach, and the assignments we had to mark, left no time for me to prepare my lessons. The experience was doing me no good and the children were not benefiting. Fortunately, I got a grant to study for a BA honours in Sociology and the opportunity was too good miss. So I resigned and returned to university.

For the degree, I carried out field work at Cliffdale not far from Durban, initially without giving any thought to what purpose the information I was gathering would be used. I recall, on one occasion, standing outside an Indian school when an English man on the university staff asked me what prospects the children had. I replied, 'Hope'.

I continued thinking about the political implications of various philosophical questions. I had come to the conclusion that every human being regardless of race, gender or religious faith has a right to justice, fairness and a dignified and fulfilling life. No nation, no people can base their security and happiness on the misery of another people. The right to justice is indivisible. It appeared to me then that two urgent practical steps had to be taken. First, the apartheid Christian Nationalist state had to be dismantled and a democratic state accountable to its citizens established: we all had to be citizens and not the subjects of administrative decisions. Second, the people had to be empowered. The effects of years of deprivation would have to be undone. This I thought would be more demanding than the measures needed to remove the apartheid government from power. Although I did not have the answers, the seeds of many questions had been sown and, having completed my honours year, I persuaded my father to finance me to study further in Britain.

London

I arrived in London in the foggy, icy winter of 1957. I joined Mac Maharaj (Mac), and two other South African students (Hassim and Tony Seedat) in their single bed-sit room in Notting Hill Gate. Shortly afterwards, we found decent accommodation in Tottenham at 28 Downhills Park Road. Mac and I took on supply teaching in the East End and signed up at the London School of Economics for the three-year LLB. Mac also introduced me to Vella and Patsy Pillay. Their welcoming home in East Finchley became a place for us to meet and talk and we began a regular formal discussion group. Included in the group were Kader Asmal, many years later to become a South African government minister, and Mana Chetty who went on to study civil engineering and work in East Germany (the then German Democratic Republic), before settling in the United Kingdom. We also spent a lot of time stuffing the *World Marxist Review* into addressed envelopes to send to South Africa. I do not know if anyone read this journal. I found it turgid and fairly incomprehensible. Later we also posted the African Communist.

Back in South Africa, the Congress Alliance was building up mass boycotts of products of Nationalist controlled businesses. In our group we discussed what kinds of pressure could be put on the apartheid government. In London we had access to news that would have been difficult to know in South Africa. For example, there were the ongoing wars in Algeria and Vietnam. The period following the end of the Second World War was bloody. Most of the wars were fought in countries where people of colour lived. The right to national self determination, it seemed, applied only to the nations of Europe. We found some hope in the Cuban revolution.

In addition to demonstrating outside South Africa House, we took part in many demonstrations calling for the various colonial states in Africa to be granted their independence. A number of African countries were heading that way while the apartheid regime was tightening its grip. In April 1959, the ANC with the Congress Alliance called for a boycott of South African goods. In London, the Anti-Apartheid Movement was set up and over time would campaign successfully for a range of boycotts to isolate the country. A huge demonstration in March 1960 followed the massacre at Sharpeville, lasting for several days. Both the ANC and PAC were banned soon afterwards, forcing them underground. Our demonstrations increased. However, I have no recollection of us studying in our formal discussion group the likelihood of the Congress Alliance taking up arms against the South African government. If we had, I am sure we would have set about reading whatever we could find on warfare. We had the intellectual resources to undertake such a study but we did not.

China

It was also in the Spring of 1961 that Vella told me about a request from 'our people' in South Africa for someone to study radio technology and communication and to return to South Africa to teach others. I asked how long the course would take and was told three months. I was coming to the end of my LLB. I also learned that Mac Maharaj was going to the German Democratic Republic to study printing technology. At that point, my only knowledge of a radio was how to turn it on and to tune into a station. Without giving the matter further thought, I said, 'Yes'. Many years later, I learned that Vella had discussed approaching me with Mac who thought that I was a suitable candidate because I had taken apart and put together a clock. My qualification for the job was that I had 'patience'. I did, for my own amusement, take apart and put together a clock, but I did not get it working!

There were a number of things of which I was unaware. Strange as it may seem, I did not know that Vella was the representative in Europe for the South African Communist Party (SACP). No doubt that was Party secrecy. Nor was I told that my radio training was in preparation for the movement undertaking armed struggle. The focus in our study group at Vella's had been on political work and organisation in pressuring for change. Today, I can read in various books and documents about the secret discussions and debates among the ANC and SACP leaders behind the decision to take up arms. In his interview with Padraig O'Malley, Vella speaks of Rusty Bernstein (a member of the SACP Central Committee, in 1961 still in South Africa) enquiring whether it was possible to recruit South Africans who were living in London to undergo military training.[2] But I wonder if they really understood the intellectual, mental and physical preparation required of individuals who are required to serve either as officers or foot soldiers in an armed struggle? Perhaps I would have made the same decision had I been told more about the context of my radio training, but I would also have wanted to ask certain questions. People who are going to

2. V. Pillay, interview by P. O'Malley 30 December 2002, The Heart of Hope. www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley, accessed 2 October 2007.

implement underground work of any kind have to be more than ciphers. While secrecy was obviously of concern, it also inhibits vital discussion and intellectual development.

I was told by Vella to travel to Prague and meet with Moses Mabhida and Wilton Mkwayi who were living at the Atlantic Hotel. Vella arranged my travel documents and I left for Prague. I did not inform my parents as I knew that the project was secret. Simply going to communist China would be enough to bring trouble. So the story I gave out was that I was making my way home through Africa and I expected to arrive in a matter of months.

I arrived in Prague some time in July 1961. I spent a while enjoying myself walking the streets of this beautiful old city. I learnt here that Wilton Mkwayi would accompany me to China. We left for China by air sometime in August or September, stopping overnight in Moscow before a flight to Beijing where we were met by officials of the Chinese Communist Party. We were taken to a compound consisting of several dwellings and protected by two armed guards at the gate. Wilton and I shared a room in one of the cottages. We had an interpreter, Comrade Ting. She was tiny and friendly. When I asked her what documents we would need to get around Beijing, she said that we would be taken where ever we wanted to go. One day, she asked me if the guards had let us leave the compound. I laughed and said that we hadn't gone outside, but if we had I wouldn't tell her. I used to tease her gently, asking what she would do in various situations. Her answer, invariably, was that the Party would tell them what to do.

In Beijing, we were told to await the arrival of four others who would be coming from South Africa. Whether Vella had known about them, I don't know. Left to ourselves Wilton and I had a lot of time to talk. I hadn't known him before. He was a wonderful man, inspiring affection and trust, and I enjoyed his companionship. It was during one of our conversations that he said, 'I know my people. I know what they will do. I will have to oppose them. I think that I will survive this battle, but I'm not sure that I will survive the next'. I can't recall now what I said, but his words stuck in my memory. I understood him to be saying that even after we got rid of the apartheid government, we would still have to face internal divisions and conflict. I warmed to Wilton as someone who was profoundly non-racialist. He was someone with whom I would have gone through fire.

It was probably about October, when the others finally arrived: Raymond Mhlaba, Joe Gqabi, Patrick Mthembu, and Andrew Mlangeni. Clearly it had not been so easy for them to travel from South Africa as it had been for me from London. I hadn't known any of them before and I was introduced as Steve. No one in the group, including Wilton, knew my real name 'Nandha', nor did I personally reveal anything else about myself, including where I came from or my education.

Raymond Mhlaba was in charge of our group and remained a rather distant figure while we were still all together. My predominant memory is of him sitting behind a desk, writing or reading. Once our group was complete, we were each given a medical and dental examination. My eyes were checked and new glasses prescribed. We were all given suits, tailored to measure (I still have mine), and a new pair of shoes plus a small allowance. The cigarettes were awful. My teeth were soon stained black and for some inexplicable reason I continued to smoke.

Living as a group created a new dynamic. I remember asking my hosts for something to read. The result was that each of us had delivered a box full of books! Now came the

question from Andrew Mlangeni: 'Who asked for these books?' I said that I had asked for something to read. 'Who mandated you?' I replied, 'If I were at home, I would have just gone to the shop and bought one. If you don't want the books, ask them to take the box away'. The same questioning occurred when I wanted a drink and asked my hosts if I could have a brandy. Shortly afterwards, a bottle of brandy arrived. Again the question, 'Who mandated you to ask?' and my reply, 'At home, if I had the money, I would have gone out and bought myself a drink. If you don't want to drink it, don't!' Well, they all enjoyed the drink.

Was there some distrust because as an 'Indian' I was clearly not an ANC member, compounded with my not automatically conforming to a group discipline? Perhaps so. It was not something openly discussed, but I recall Andrew Mlangeni telling me that I must be 'an adventurer'. Joe Gqabi, who had considerable presence, also asked Patrick Mthembu and Andrew Mlangeni not to discriminate against me, although I can't recall what provoked the comment.

After the others arrived, a member of the Chinese communist party gave us a series of lectures on the history of their party and the policies it pursued in the civil war and the war against the Japanese invaders. Comrade Ting translated. A revolutionary movement, they said, had to live among the people like fish in water. We were being introduced to the concept of Revolutionary War.

There was also the topic of Soviet foreign policy, namely 'peaceful co-existence' with the West. The Chinese position, in my crude summary, was that the West was not prepared to leave socialist societies alone and that peaceful co-existence was therefore not possible. However, my recollection is that they were stating their position and we were free to make up our minds.

We were dined, taken to see Chinese classical opera and films, all of which illustrated how they were using the arts to get their message across to the people. Policy formulation and implementation we were told was 'bottom up, top down'. At the request of our leader Raymond Mhlaba, a meeting was arranged with Mao Zedong. We were taken to a building off Tiananmen Square. Mao received us individually, with an interpreter, at the door of a modestly furnished lounge. Once we were seated, he listened carefully to Raymond Mhlaba before saying that whatever they had to tell us was simply illustrative. He also said that everything changes, including Marxism and communism. Our policies, he said, should be formulated on the basis of a study and understanding of our situation. Mao went on to say that our situation in South Africa had similarities with the struggle in Algeria and suggested that it might be worth studying that conflict. I remember this because it made a deep impression on me.

After our initial induction as a group, Andrew Mlangeni and I were taken to Shenyang (Mukden) to be taught radio technology and communication. The others were taken to Nanching (Nanking) for military training. We were not introduced by name to the person who was tasked to accompany us to Shenyang on an overnight train. Probably a ranking officer, although in civilian clothes, he was accompanied by an interpreter. Being curious, I asked questions. The reply I got, through the interpreter, was that I was asking too many questions. This was my first lesson. The remainder of the journey was completed in silence. We were to meet once more, later, when the same man came to see how we were doing. My companion Andrew greeted him, 'How nice to meet you again! How are you?'

The reply was abrupt. 'I am not interested in you. I am only interested in your work'. After that, silence. Lesson reinforced. Our relationship with our tutors was friendly, courteous and impersonal.

In Shenyang, we were driven to a large complex in a car which had curtained windows. We were given padded clothing to ward off the bitter cold. I couldn't work out what the complex was, but it was probably a military establishment. We had a small lounge, with a shared bed room and shower. Our work room was directly across the corridor. We had no contact with the outside world or any one else working or living in the building apart from our tutor and an interpreter.

Here we were taught Morse Code, each using a morse key. The learning was by rote, morning and afternoon. Our food was prepared and brought in; our laundry was taken care of. We only left our accommodation when we were taken out to dine, visit the sauna for a steam bath, or go for a walk. Otherwise we were indoors and with no contact with outsiders. All we had to do was learn the Morse Code. When I fell ill, two doctors were summoned and, after examining me, they administered intravenously some powerful medication which got me back on my feet pretty quickly. We progressed to about 60 words per minute and then our performance hit a plateau. Our tutors made the decision to stop the afternoon sessions and slowly our performance crept to 100+ words per minute.

When the initial Morse Code training came to an end, we were relocated to the uppermost floor of a high-rise building near a frozen river. Looking through the window, I could see small vegetable plots, also completely frozen. Our living accommodation was good and similar to what we had before. When asked if we had studied physics, we both answered 'No' and this had to be taken into account. The team engaged in teaching us comprised one team leader, two interpreters, a typist, a physicist and two specialists in Morse transmission. We were now having to transmit live. I think our day started at eight in the morning with a ten minute break every hour, a two hour break for lunch and then at least another three hours.

In teaching us some basic physics, we were taught the function of each component in a radio and transmitter circuit (valves, capacitors, resistors, coils, transformers, and the design, specification and function of each of these components) and to read a circuit diagram. A radio receiver and transmitter is an assembly of several circuits each serving a specific function. At one of our lessons I recall asking our tutor if we could have a radio removed from its casing to test whether we could reproduce on paper the circuit diagram. Our tutors agreed. I think I completed the task successfully.

We were also given a basic understanding of electromagnetic wave propagation. What we were studying was the practical application of theories based on observed phenomena during experimentation and often serendipity. We were in a new field of learning.

The concept of numbers did not come easily to me and I was diffident, having matriculated without mathematics. My maths teacher at high school, a Mr Bishom, would address questions to each child in the class but, when it came to me, he would say 'Donkey, pass, next'. This went on for four years. Now here I was being required to understand mathematical formulas. More scary for me, a failed teacher, was the thought that I would have to teach this complex subject back in South Africa to people with little formal education in a hostile dangerous environment, and with minimum resources. It did not help my confidence when Andrew one day asked me to explain something that we had been told

in class and when I tried, his response was, 'How can that be? You're misleading me'. The distrust engendered by colonial division and apartheid went deep. How do you explain, I wondered, the heat that is generated when a bundle of copper wire is rotated between two magnets or the heat that is generated when pulsating electrical energy is passed through, or placed close to, a bundle of copper wire? You can only observe the phenomenon, make inferences, offer explanations, and, if you are clever, come up with a theory that works. We later put Andrew's question to our teacher and he went over everything again. I could see that there was more to teaching than knowledge alone. The information being conveyed had to be carefully prepared with the learner in mind, taking into account their intellectual preparedness. After each class, I spent my time making notes of what I had learned. I asked for them to be sent to Vella Pillay back in London as I thought that they could be useful in the future.

After we had learnt the Morse Code to the minimum standard required, we went 'live'. We each had a transmitter/receiver with head phones and a pencil and pad with individually referenced spaces. We learnt the protocol for receiving and transmitting signals and were individually supervised throughout. Our practice runs required total concentration. The world outside was shut out. I was aware that my manual dexterity in using the Morse key was wanting and I didn't completely master the technique. Andrew was better at transmitting than I was.

Receiving had its own problems. The traffic in radio signals was extremely dense and there was interference from static. It was like trying to follow a conversation in a crowded bar with everyone talking at the top of their voices. Concentration had to be maintained for however long the transmission went. In practice, operating in clandestine conditions, we were advised that the communication had to be in short bursts.

If you are working from someone's home, connected to their electricity supply, the instruments at the power generating plant will register a sudden and significant surge in the consumption of electricity at the address from which you are operating. For this reason, and that electromagnetic radiation could be traced to its source, we were advised to keep our transmissions brief and to be constantly on the move.

The course in physics and electronics was interesting. I understood the concepts and was able to cope with the mathematics. I enjoyed the challenge of learning something new. Yet I found learning the Morse Code tedious and dull, and I was not able to master adequately the technique of using the morse key. It was the last word of the last lesson when I gave vent to my frustration by banging hard on the key. This was indiscipline. My tutor was not pleased.

In addition to our radio work, although I hadn't expected this, we were shown how to take apart and reassemble a pistol and an automatic rifle. What we learnt was what many white South Africans were taught as a matter of routine. I found that it wasn't easy to fire a rifle or pistol with accuracy. With the pistol you had to ensure that the barrel didn't tip when you squeezed the trigger. I asked my hosts to provide me with a pistol which they did, with the firing pin removed. I would spend a few minutes each day pointing the pistol at a target, with a match stick balanced at front of the barrel, and squeeze the trigger. The aim was to squeeze the trigger without the match stick falling off the barrel. If it fell you were off target. With some practice I got quite good at it. But using the automatic rifle was another matter. It was easy to fire one shot at a time and get on target, or to empty the

chamber in a fraction of a second, wasting bullets that went all over the place. However, the aim was controlled fire. You had to hit the target with a specified number of bullets, not more and not less. This was difficult but with practice, and a good ear and eye, it could be done. As a sport it could be fun but ceases to be funny when you are told that you and your adversary will be using live ammunition; and, in close quarter combat, the butt and bayonet. Fortunately for me, this was not the focus of our training.

At weekends, we could relax and were entertained for lunch. Sometimes we were taken for walks in the park. Once we were taken to a plant where radio valves were being manufactured and also to a steel fabricating plant. I wear glasses. However, this did not prevent a small shard of metal lodging itself in my eye. My hosts took me immediately to an ophthalmic surgeon, very pretty and young, who gently prised it out and gave me some medication to relieve the pain.

When the course came to an end some six months later in July 1962, I was told that my mother had died. She had died on 29 June and I would later learn that my family had been making frantic efforts to get hold of me. Our Chinese hosts apologised for not informing me earlier, but the decision had been taken not to distract me. For a time I put my mother's death out of my mind. I had been very close to her and I doubt if I could have coped otherwise.

While in China our world was solely the enterprise in which we were engaged. The world outside and news had ceased to exist. We returned to Beijing where we were reunited with the rest of the group. A tour was arranged that took us by train to Shanghai and then by car to the mountains where the communists under the leadership of Mao Zedong had set up a base camp.

I'd been away from London for some 15 months by now, instead of the projected three months, and there was still the matter of getting back to London, and then home.

Back to Prague

Shortly after returning to Beijing, I flew on my own to Prague where I was met by an official of the Czech Communist Party, closely allied to the Soviet Communist Party. While we had been in China, the country's relations with the Soviet Union had seriously deteriorated. Completely oblivious of this, I arrived in Prague during the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. Mao's open critique of Khrushchev for withdrawing Soviet missiles precipitated the breaking off of relations between the two countries. I was called for an interview by members of the Czech Communist Party. It was Kafkaesque. The Party officials sat in a semi-circle with me seated on a chair looking at them. I can only recall one of their questions. 'In which department will you be working?' I had no idea of what my future held, but I answered 'political department'! I couldn't see the point of their interrogation and I didn't know to whom they were reporting. Afterwards, however, I suspected that they were trying to see if I had been brainwashed in China.

While in Prague, I also witnessed charges being drilled into the huge Stalin monument on the Letna hill, in preparation for its demolition. Some elderly women stood on the bridge near me, with tears streaming down their faces. I also asked my minder if we could go to Lidice where I watched a film, taken by Germans, showing the village after it had been destroyed and its inhabitants butchered. I've not forgotten the image of two Nazi

soldiers grinning in that carnage. It was both instructive and disturbing. War and its outcomes held no romance for me. Could I end up like those soldiers? I felt disquiet.

I left Prague soon afterwards, when travel arrangements had been made for me to return to London. On the flight I opened my passport to check what had been stamped in it and found a loose document in Chinese. I chewed and swallowed it. The passenger sitting next to me must have thought I was indeed strange. On arrival back in the UK, I looked at the officials at the passport counter searching for a kindly face. When I found the person I thought would be kind, I approached him and presented my expired South African passport. The immigration officer told me that things had changed since I had been away. South Africa had left the Commonwealth in May 1961 and so I was now subject to different conditions. Nevertheless, I was given three months leave to stay.

I recall meeting Idris Cox, Secretary to the International Department of the British Communist Party at Vella and Patsy Pillay's home in Muswell Hill, London. I can't remember what we spoke about at this meeting except a lingering recollection that it was intended to find out if I had been indoctrinated in China. I have no recollection of being asked about the course I had been on.

Returning to South Africa

I found that Mac had already returned to South Africa. It seems that with his GDR training he hadn't experienced the same delays. Once again, Vella arranged my travel and I left for home in the middle of December. My three-month 'journey through Africa' – my cover story – had been extended to 18 months. Our plane stopped for refuelling in Tripoli where we were asked to disembark. It was a beautiful, starry moonlit night and it was a relief to leave the cigarette smoke-filled cabin. A short distance from me another man was enjoying the fresh night air. A few minutes later he was joined by an acquaintance. Their conversation struck me. 'Hi! What you doing now?' The reply came in Afrikaans-accented English. 'I'm flying over the Congo! GLORY! GLORY!' The man caught my eye in a sideways glance. He realised that I was listening, and stopped. What was this South African doing flying over the Congo? I was back to the South African nightmare.

I arrived in Johannesburg on 15 December 1962 and presented my passport. The officials saw that it had expired and rang their superior. I was allowed in and immediately took a flight to Durban. My arrival was unannounced. I took a taxi to my aunt's home, wanting to freshen up before going on to my dad's farm. On the way we were stopped at a police roadblock and searched. While 16 December had traditionally been a public holiday in which Afrikaners celebrated their victory over Zulus at Blood River, Umkhonto we Sizwe had chosen to launch its first acts of sabotage on that date the previous year. Of course I had been in China then and unaware that this was probably the reason for the roadblock. There was nothing for the police to find in the taxi and we were allowed on our way.

When I arrived at my aunt's home, my father happened to be visiting. He was clearly pleased to see me, but asked no questions. This was a relief because I would have hated to lie to his face. I kept my emotions on a tight rein. I was also introduced to my stepmother and returned with them to the family farm, about ten miles inland from Stanger. My father's re-marriage surprised me, especially as I could feel that he and my youngest brother

and sisters were still in mourning. There was a void which my stepmother could not fill. I regret to say that I did not have my father's restraint and I asked him why he had married again. He and my mother had been soul partners. It was impertinent of me, I who had been completely out of reach for so long. He replied that he was experiencing difficulty running his farm and caring for three young teenagers. He uttered no words of rebuke but I knew that when I had first left for London, I had promised him that I would return if he needed me. He had certainly needed me when my mother died. What could I say to him? In addition to the necessity of secrecy around the work that I hoped to do, in what danger would I be placing him in if I indicated what I was involved in? What would happen if I had to disappear again without explanation? Later, some months after my arrest, I would learn from my brother Boya that when the police had come to question my dad, his answer to them was, 'You have a problem with my son. I do not have a problem with him'.

I did not tell my father that I had abandoned preparing for admission to the Bar in England. With my diversions, I had barely scraped through my LLB but nevertheless thought that I could rely on my London law degree for admission to practice in South Africa. I was preoccupied with the enterprise to which I had committed myself. I had to be able to support myself now and develop a credible cover.

Mac was supposed to make contact with me and, while waiting for this, I set about preparing for exams in Roman Dutch Law, South African Statute Law and Legal Procedure. In the meantime I tried to secure articles with a firm of attorneys to complete the practical requirements for admission as an attorney. This was proving difficult. None of those I approached, all Indians and possibly members of the Natal Indian Congress, was helpful or encouraging. I represented competition. I could tell that my father was getting anxious. I was living with him and making no headway as far as he could see. I had to do something. There was a vacancy at a local Indian school and I thought that I might get a job. There too, I was turned down. I learned later the reason when someone told me that the headmaster was not going 'to bite the hand that fed him'.

Underground contact

Mac made contact some time in May 1963, visiting me on the farm. Mac told me that the Leadership wanted me in Johannesburg. He also informed me that my name, with the address of my father's farm, had appeared on an underground mailing list kept by Paul Joseph. At that stage, I didn't know Paul who lived in Johannesburg. Mac said that he had immediately asked for my name to be removed as my security, and that of anyone working with me, could be compromised. He had enquired how Paul had got my name. It transpired that my sister Radha had met the Josephs when travelling by train from Laurenco Marques to Johannesburg, after a flight from London. She must have been returning because of our mother. Radha, who had been studying in India, had arrived in London after I had left for China and was missing. It had been an anxious time with my mother's illness and both parents asking after me. The Josephs had concluded from their conversation with my sister that I may be sympathetic to the cause to which they were devoted. Fortunately no harm was done.

On his return to South Africa, Mac had based himself in Johannesburg but told me that he had come to see my father after my mother had died. That touched me. My mother

wanted to see me before she died. Her daily plea had been: 'Where is my son? Where is my son?' According to my brother Boya, a letter in my handwriting, posted locally, had arrived shortly before my mother died. I had prepared a number of these letters while in China, hoping that with the help of various Chinese diplomatic missions they could be posted from different locations in Africa. I was over-optimistic but this one had somehow got to Mac and he had posted it in South Africa. My family had realised that it was a proxy posting and I doubt that the letter gave either my mother or father any reassurance. Nevertheless, I appreciated that Mac had gone to pay his respects.

Jobless, and living on the farm, I explained my present problem to him. I could see that my dad needed help on the farm, but I was in a fix. I couldn't get into a situation where he would become dependent on me and at the same time make myself available for political work.

Electricity was not available on the farm. I had no money to establish and equip a workshop or to buy components. I had no idea whether the equipment and components I would need were available on the open market and whether it could be bought without arousing suspicion. I needed a job both as a cover and for an income. Mac agreed and said that he would see what he could do.

It was now July. I could not disregard the instruction conveyed to me by Mac that I report to the Leadership in Johannesburg. Although regarded in law as citizens, Natal Indians had no entitlement to live outside Natal or to leave Natal without a permit. My intention was to travel to Johannesburg without the necessary permit. If this became known it would suggest rebelliousness. I had already had a visit from the security police shortly after my return and I could not exclude the possibility that the police were watching me. So I decided to apply for a permit to travel to Johannesburg. I was granted a limited visit and, by some strange coincidence, my brother Bala visited the magistrate's office soon afterwards. He saw a copy of my permission paper on the desk and when the officer's back was turned, he quickly removed it, scrunching it into his pocket. This was not the only time that he acted intuitively on my behalf, suspecting that I might be involved in underground work.

I travelled to Johannesburg by train, having scrounged the train fare from my father. I have a subsequent, rather blurred, memory of Mac introducing me to Ruth First in Johannesburg. I cannot recall now whether my visit took place before or after the police raid on Lilliesleaf Farm at Rivonia, in which almost all the High Command were arrested on 11 July 1963.

In Johannesburg I stayed with Mac as I knew no one else there. Although I can't recall the place where we met Ruth who was banned – perhaps it was a library – I retain a sense of her looking incredibly stressed.

I left Johannesburg with instructions conveyed to me by Mac to make a number of electronic appliances which, when connected to a battery and turned on, emitted sound at audio frequency for the purpose of teaching the Morse Code. I made these appliances, working secretly in the bathroom of a friend's house late at night, and subsequently gave them to Paul Joseph who had been asked by Mac to collect them. The next time I was to meet Paul was in prison in Pretoria.

Once back in Durban, I received a message to contact the attorney J.N. Singh of J.N. Singh & Radhi Singh. Success. I was taken on as an articled clerk. J.N. Singh, a former executive member of the South African Indian Congress, had been active in the Passive Resistance and Defiance campaigns, and as 'a listed restricted communist' was a banned

person. His level of restrictions, however, didn't prevent him continuing his work. Long afterwards, I learned that he was an old university friend of Ruth First's. After Mac had discussed my position with her, a word from Ruth had secured me a job. Although we never discussed politics, J.N. Singh must have suspected my involvement.

Because Mac was my only contact with the movement, I was essentially 'sleeping' and steered clear of political conversations with anyone. I wouldn't be surprised if some of the people with whom I drank in Stanger were police informers. Out on the farm, we also rarely had a newspaper. I was unaware of Andrew Mlangeni's arrest and Patrick Mthembu's capture. These events were probably not widely publicised, unlike the security police raid on Rivonia that led to the arrest of almost the entire High Command of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Ruth's husband, Joe Slovo, had slipped out of the country just in time and Ruth would be detained not long afterwards.

The Rivonia arrests also included the leading member of our China group, Raymond Mhlaba. Although not in the High Command, Andrew Mlangeni would be charged alongside the others with sabotage and conspiracy, for which the maximum penalty was death by hanging. Nelson Mandela, who had been sentenced to five years in jail after his capture the previous year, was brought from prison to join the accused. When the 'Rivonia Trial' opened in October 1963, Patrick Mthembu was listed to give evidence for the state. According to Joel Joffe, a member of the defence team, of all the 173 prosecution witnesses, Mthembu's defection was said to cause the greatest anger to the accused.[3] He had known and worked personally with them all and was the only ANC member of any standing whom the state could persuade, with its solitary confinement and torture, to turn on his former comrades and buy his own freedom.

Unbeknown to me, a new Umkhonto High Command was being established by Wilton Mkwayi and others, to which Mac was closely linked. It was a while before he came to see me again, maybe March or April 1964. Working at J.N. Singh's, I was now renting a room from a landlady in Verbena Road, off Wills Road, in a fairly central location of Durban. I can't recall if this is where we met, but I would have told him where I was living. He conveyed an instruction to me to accompany him to Johannesburg to meet someone. I was not told who I was going to meet. On the journey I remember suggesting that we should consider building an underground radio communication network and Mac saying that the matter should be brought up in Johannesburg.

I know now that he was acting on the instructions of Wilton Mkwayi and Ruth First, Wilton Mkwayi in his capacity as Head of the reconstituted High Command and Ruth First as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa.

I stayed with Mac in the servants' quarters that he was renting in 21 Pearse Street in Doornfontein. While I was there, a man with a mop of fair hair came to see me. We didn't introduce ourselves and I didn't tell him that I had come up from Durban. Only later would I learn that he was Lionel Gay, a physics lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand; a member of the new Umkhonto High Command. I don't recall whether Mac stayed. We spoke about building radios and transmitters. Although I can't recall specifics, I must have told him what I could obtain and what would be difficult. Before leaving, he gave me two Philips' journals containing circuit diagrams.

3. J. Joffe, *The State vs Nelson Mandela* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007).

Eight of the Rivonia trialists were sentenced to life imprisonment on 12 June 1964, including Andrew Mlangeni who had not been in the leadership. I had no further contact with Mac until the week beginning Sunday 28 June when, at some point, he came to my lodgings. He suggested that I obtain a post box to facilitate communication between us. I was hesitant. My difficulty was that I would have to provide a false name and address, and I wasn't psychologically prepared. Mac went away, turning up with a key for a post box the next day. I concealed it in a crevice of my table. Little did we know that our next meeting would be in prison.

Only with later knowledge, was I able to piece together the sequence of events up to the date of my arrest. Mac had left Johannesburg for Durban on 27 June to collect his wife Tim who had been doing a course at St Aidan's Hospital. He remained unaware that two members of the new High Command had been arrested: Dave Kitson, whom I had known briefly in London, had been arrested on 22 June[4] and Lionel Gay (who had met me in Mac's place in Doornfontein) on 27 June, the same day Mac set off for Durban.[5] Mac did not know how rapidly the net was closing in. Nor did I when we met.

By Friday 3 July 1964, a nationwide security police swoop had detained a host of Communist Party activists and others, including white liberals who had turned to armed resistance. From Durban, Mac and his wife Tim travelled to visit his parents in Newcastle, oblivious of the unfolding assault on the resistance until he read about the arrests in the Sunday papers.[6] He then returned immediately with Tim to Johannesburg, to his lodgings in Pearce Street, where they were both arrested on Monday 6 July. As Mac had been my only contact, there was no one to inform me of his detention. Even if I had known of his arrest, I might not have been overly worried because the police had, in my thinking, no information connecting me to Mac. Nor did I know that the fair-haired man I had met at Mac's home had been arrested a week earlier and was co-operating with the police. However, even if I had known, without any link to a network or safe house, my options were limited.

On Thursday 9 July, I stopped to talk to an old school friend of mine and went off to spend the evening with him. I returned late and my landlady, who had stayed up waiting for me to return, informed me that some white friends had come to see me. I didn't have any white friends and it could mean only one thing. With nowhere to take refuge, I went to bed and to work the next day. My fears were confirmed when J.N. Singh told me that a source in the Security Branch office had passed on that my name had been mentioned, causing a certain amount of excitement.

Arrest

I was arrested by the security police on Friday 10 July 1964 at about 5pm close to my lodgings. I was walking up Wills Road when a voice called out sharply from a parked car,

4. N. Kitson, *Where Sixpence Lives* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987).
5. L. Gay in *The State v Wilton Mkwayi and Others* in the Supreme Court of South Africa (Witwatersrand Local Division), November 1964, 196. University of Witwatersrand Library (UWL) Historical Papers, AK2520 Boxes 29–30, 1964.
6. P. O'Malley, *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 117.

'Steve!' I was the only person on the pavement. 'Get in, we want you for questioning'. A large number of police were involved in making my arrest. Among them were two Indians, including one whom I knew, from a family who lived about five miles from my dad's farm. I swore at him. I was taken to a police station where an Indian member of the security police named Naygar took off my coat and held me. I resented that more than anything. The other officer was an Afrikaner named Steenkamp with a menacing posture and presence. My recollection is that he knew little about why I was arrested and asked few questions.

That weekend, I was detained in a police cell at Hillcrest police station near Durban. I was given one blanket and a felt mat to place on a concrete floor. It was mid-winter and very cold. Although no word passed between me and my gaoler, the food I received was not prison fare and must have come from what his wife had prepared for his family. However, it was so icy in my cell that the fat in the food congealed before I could finish eating. I was being prepared for interrogation.

Early on Tuesday morning, 14 July, I was handed into the custody of Captain Swanepoel – the notorious 'Rooi Rus' – and Warrant Officer Nell. They had come from Johannesburg for me. I was manacled but not put in leg irons. The journey to 'The Grays', Security Police Headquarters in Johannesburg, had begun.

Interrogation

As we entered a room on the top floor of the Grays, I told Swanepoel that I was not going to talk. He replied that I would, adding that he would give me no quarter and, were the tables ever turned, he would ask for none. He kicked a chair out of the way and said, 'Stand there!' Leaving a plain clothes policeman to guard me, Swanepoel went off. The officer sat while I stood, but both of us had to remain awake. I stood watching the police officer take apart and reassemble a pistol. Swanepoel returned the next day, having had his rest, and my interrogation began in earnest. The questioning, I recall, lasted approximately the next 36 hours, while I was kept standing throughout that time. I had not slept the previous 72 hours because my cell at Hillcrest had been so cold.

'Where's your passport? '
'I handed it to the authorities at the airport'.
'What were you doing since the date of your arrival in South Africa?'
'Studying'.
'Who was teaching you?'
'Teaching myself'.
'You clever bastard! They put all the others to work pretty quickly. I can't understand why they didn't put you to work'.
I remained silent.
'You are like the bloody Jews'.
Silence.
'They've all gone, leaving you to face the music'.
Silence.
'If the Kaffirs come into power they'll kick you out. They'll let us stay because we have some skills to offer'.
Silence.

At some point the interrogation turned specific.

> 'What is your relation to Mac?'

The question suggested Swanepoel knew that Mac and I were acquainted. It seemed to me that it would be pointless to deny that I knew him. 'We were at university at the same time. He is a graduate of the University of Natal'.

I couldn't resist asserting Mac's educational qualifications. Later I would learn that Mac had been pretending to be a 'Solly Matthews'. He had registered in Johannesburg under the race classification 'Coloured' and had apparently been trying to convince Swanepoel that he wasn't the one-eyed Mac Maharaj but was a one-eyed Solly Matthews. I had only ever known him as Mac, my friend who always sported a distinctive goatee beard. By now, I had gathered that he had been arrested, as well as the fair-haired man whom Mac had arranged for me to meet at his place. There appeared to be a chain of arrests but, for security reasons, only Mac knew where I lived. I didn't dwell on this. My mind was focused on surviving.

I was questioned about the audio frequency oscillators that the police found in Mac's home. It was clear they already knew that I had made them so, again, there was no point me denying it. However, I said that I had made them at my father's home. I certainly didn't want my friend's house searched and the police finding my equipment.

> 'Where are the two Phillips journals?'
> 'My bedroom in my father's house on the farm'.

Swanepoel ordered a search of my dad's house and they raided the farm the next day. After finding nothing, Swanepoel demanded once again to know where they were.

> 'You asked me where these journals were and I told you. If these journals aren't where I said they were, I don't know what became of them'.

Later I learnt that my brother Bala, on hearing of my arrest, had hurried to the farm to clear away anything incriminating. On finding the Philips journals, he had destroyed them along with some banned literature that he had kept there himself. My brother had the presence of mind to remove and cast away radio components and carcases of old radio sets which I had collected to cannibalise.

While seeming to accept that the journals were a dead end, Swanepoel persisted in wanting to know what I had been doing.

> 'You know what you have done? You have committed treason!'

For some obscure reason, the words 'There is no treason where treason doth triumph' crossed my mind – and I laughed. Swanepoel leaped violently forward, pushing the desk in front of him. He screamed at me, 'After all this you could laugh!'

Another time, he threatened me. 'We could shoot you and throw you down one of the mine shafts. Our chaps will investigate and nothing will come of it'.

But he did not assault me. I was lucky.

I was taken from the Grays to Marshall Square police station early on Thursday morning. I had been standing on one spot throughout the interrogation, taken once to the toilet, and I have no recollection of being offered food and water.

I told the African warder that they had given me a hard time and asked if he could get me some cigarettes. A packet of cigarettes and a box of matches was kicked into my cell through the space under the door. Before that I had watched him carefully pick bedding which was still in its wrapping. On one other occasion, the same warder smuggled a newspaper to me. I also recall another occasion when an African warder told me, that some of his colleagues may be harsh and that I should be forgiving because they did not understand. The cell in which I was incarcerated had the words 'Kathrada was here' scratched on the wall near the door, Ahmed Kathrada – 'Kathy' – being one of the Rivonia trialists.

I immediately fell into a deep sleep only to be awakened by a loud banging on the door. I was taken away for more questioning. This time, my ankles could barely take my weight and I wobbled. I have no memory of how long Swanepoel kept me standing again, nor of the questions he asked this time, but I don't think I gave him any satisfaction beyond admitting to what they already knew. I can't specifically recall questions about China. Patrick Abel Mthembu, who had already appeared as a state witness in the Rivonia Trial, could have mentioned the presence of a 'Steve' who fitted my description. Of more concern to Swanepoel was what I was doing with my training.

I was assaulted once, in the lift, by a policeman in the presence of others who simply watched. The assault was preceded by words to the effect: 'I was in Durban at the time of the riots against you Coolies, protecting you lot from the Kaffirs and this is your thanks'. This was followed by a punch to my jaw and a knee to my groin. Given the Special Branch's repertoire of torture, I was fortunate to have been left otherwise physically intact.

Refusal to sign a statement and give evidence for the state

On 20 July 1964, I was taken to make a statement at the Grays. Warrant Officer Nell questioned me, writing as I spoke. Swanepoel had focused entirely on what I had been doing after my return but had found nothing concrete to support a charge beyond what they had from Patrick Mthembu about my presence in China and what Lionel Gay had told them. My concern was that I shouldn't incriminate anyone other than myself and when I was presented with the statement which was in the policeman's handwriting, I refused to sign it. I also rejected his invitation to become a state witness. I was not prepared to give evidence against Wilton Mkwayi and Mac Maharaj.

I can't recall what the policeman wrote in that statement but a brief summary in my declassified police file (obtained last year) says that I admitted being a member of the 'Communist Party of England' and had visited China on its instruction. I must have said this to shield Vella Pillay and the SACP. The note goes on to say that I had been instructed 'to build as many transmitters as possible in South Africa for the purpose of communist propaganda. He further admits that he actually assisted in the building of a radio transmitter in South Africa'.[7] It was my intention to build transmitters for the purpose of liberation propaganda.

7. Dept. of Justice File No 2/1/1588 (English translation) Supplementary Memorandum: Nandhagopaul Naidoo @ Steve, 11 March 1965/KW.

The same security file reveals that on 20 July another detainee (whose name has been scrubbed out by our present day authorities but whom I surmise was Lionel Gay) 'declared under oath that he met subject around the end of March 1964 and worked with him (subject) in connection with the building of a radio transmitter'.[8] The police would rely on Gay's evidence to build up a case of my involvement in 'communist propaganda'.

Mac

One day about 15 or more days into my arrest I heard a voice speaking through the eye hole of the door to my cell in Marshall Square. It said, 'Mac wants to see you'. I learnt afterwards that this was Ameen Cajee, an elderly man who, if I faced my door, was locked in the cell to my right. How did Mac know that I had been arrested? I had kept to myself and not announced my presence by shouting or by tapping in morse.

Having got the message, at the earliest opportunity I found Mac in a celI located in a wing at right angles to the one where I was. Separated by two large cells and a corridor, access to him meant entering a separate passage controlled by a barred gate. Occasionally the warder left our cell doors, as well as the barred gate, open. I recall walking across to Mac's wing about two or three times but always being anxious that the warder might suddenly appear. So the visits were very brief. It was also tricky taking a message from Mac to Ameen as Ameen was hard of hearing, especially when he was far from the door. However, my sharpest, most poignant memory is when Mac and I happened to be allowed to the wash room at the same time. I saw him close up here and it was clear that he had been tortured. His hands trembling, he told me that he knew it would be bad but he didn't realise that it would be that bad. He apologised for informing the police where they could find me. I was deeply moved.

Pretoria central prison

On sixth October, I was detained for a further 90 days and the following day transferred to Pretoria Central Prison. When we were let out of our cells to exercise briefly, I found that Mac had been moved there too. One day, a new prisoner was lodged in the cell next to mine. I discovered it was Wilton Mkwayi. Thereafter Wilton and I spent long hours conversing by tapping on the wall. Morse hadn't been part of his training so our communication went according to the alphabet – one tap for A, two for B, three for C and so on, until 26 for Z. Quite laborious and easy to get a letter wrong but we managed and it occupied us.

There were a lot of us in Pretoria, each occupying a single cell. I learned to appreciate Paul Joseph's fine voice here. At precisely six o'clock every evening, he would sing the ANC anthem Nkosi Sikel' iAfrika and everyone would join in. Although I have never been able to sing, I would stand solemnly to attention. On Fridays, we would be taken to see a magistrate who was meant to check for mistreatment. I have a memory of the corridors lined with armed police and seeing some policemen who exhibited signs of fear in our presence, one even trembling at the knees.

8. *Ibid.*

Awaiting trial at the fort

On 29 October 1964, I was charged under the catch-all Suppression of Communism Act with receiving military training abroad and belonging to an unlawful organisation. The second charge was later dropped. As an awaiting trial prisoner, I was moved in November to the Fort in Johannesburg (known as 'Number Four') where I joined Mac Maharaj, Wilton Mkwayi, Laloo Chiba and Paul Joseph. Apart from Paul, they were on trial with David Kitson and John Matthews for sabotage and treason in what became known as the 'Little Rivonia Trial', their white comrades being held in the white section of the prison.

Our conditions were dreadful. We were placed inside a large cell, each incarcerated inside a separate steel cage. As politicals we were kept apart from other prisoners. The cell with our steel cages had previously been filled to overflowing with prisoners who were alleged to have breached some law. When the prison guard opened the door, I watched them spill out. They had not only been packed inside each cage but some seemed to have been squeezed into the space between the top of the cages and the ceiling. The whole cell was infested with bugs, exuding an awful odour. We were later moved to another cell which did not have metal cages.

I now needed a lawyer. Mac suggested Joel Joffe who was representing him and who had been involved in the earlier Rivonia Trial. Joel agreed to act for me with Ruth Hayman of Hayman & Aronsohn. Meeting our lawyers gave me an opportunity to meet other political prisoners. Ironically, with only one meeting room at the Fort, this was the one place where white and black politicals might meet, even briefly chat, while waiting.

At my first meeting with the lawyers, I was given a form to complete in order to give them some details of my background and as much information as possible of what had occurred during interrogation. The form was similar to that completed by Mac in which he detailed the horrendous torture to which he had been subjected as Swanepoel pressed him to reveal the identities of 'Steve' from Durban and an elderly man whom Lionel Gay said he had also met in Pearse Street.[9] I informed my lawyers how I had been kept standing and that I had admitted to having been in China. However I denied belonging to any organisation.

Gay was a critical state witness in the trial of Wilton, Mac and the others, that began on the 20 November, and Gay's evidence ensured them very long sentences. My name came up as one of the people Gay had met in Pearse Street but he didn't identify the audio frequency oscillators found at Mac's place as those I had made.[10] Mthembu gave evidence that Wilton had received military training in China.

It was when we were incarcerated in the cell with wire cages that Mac announced that there were some prisoners (awaiting trial for the Benoni mailbag robbery, South Africa's largest heist) who had asked him and Wilton if they would join them in a bid to escape. Arms would be smuggled in. Mac wanted to know whether we would join them. Paul Joseph and I declined. The enterprise struck me as foolhardy without the co-operation of the warders, and if they co-operated no weapons would be necessary. On the other hand, if

9. P. Naidoo, *Footprints in Grey Street* (Durban: Far Ocean Jetty Publishing, 2002), 134–139.
10. L. Gay in *The State v Wilton Mkwayi and Others* in the Supreme Court of South Africa (Witwatersrand Local Division), November 1964, pp 254–257, 269. University of Witwatersrand Library (UWL) Historical Papers, AK2520 Boxes 29–30, 1964.

the escape took place from our cell with weapons, there was a good chance of Paul Joseph and me coming to a sticky end.

However, the escape bid did not take place. Some time after Wilton, Mac and Laloo had been taken away to serve their sentences, I saw the Benoni men in the exercise yard – bruised, manacled and in leg irons. I asked them what had happened. 'We tried to escape but there were more of them. We'll try again'. The charismatic leader of this group seemed quite unbowed.

'Little Rivonia' came to an end in December. Wilton received a life sentence, Dave Kitson 20 years, Laloo Chiba 18 years, John Matthews 15 years, and Mac sentenced to 12. They had been prepared for death, so this was at least life. Paul Joseph was released without charge and I was now alone in my large cell. Other awaiting trial prisoners were brought in to clean it and, surprisingly, an Indian prisoner was allowed to come and give me a hair cut using a sharp blade. In exchange, I gave him a pack of cards. When I was ill for a brief period at the Fort, the warder in charge called a doctor who left some tablets which helped. The doctor pointed out that the tablets he prescribed were very expensive. What was in his mind when he made this comment, I cannot say.

One day the warder in charge told me that he had kept me in the large cell for as long as he could and the prison was overcrowded. I am not sure why he had let me stay alone there, nor why he now offered me a choice: would I like to join the other prisoners or would I prefer to be on my own? On my own, I said, and was then moved to a very small cell.

In court

I was taken to court many times but the hearing was repeatedly adjourned. Each time prisoners were returned to the Fort from court, we were ordered to undress and stand naked, waiting to be searched and 'processed'. When the order 'Sit!' was screamed, we would all crouch down. On one such occasion I had drifted into my private world, oblivious of my surroundings, when the order to sit was barked. I remained standing. A young Afrikaner officer glowered at me. I stared back. Then I felt the hand of the prisoner sitting next to me touch my hand gently, imploring me to sit. I remained standing. There was a tense moment when the warder leaped across the desk, then stopped. I don't know what he saw in the eyes of my fellow prisoners but he turned and went back to his desk. I then crouched with the other prisoners.

Joel Joffe and Ruth Hayman, as my instructing attorneys, decided that they would treat my trial as answering a criminal charge rather than a 'political' one. Joel Joffe told me that Cecil Margo QC who usually represented the South African Police would represent me in Court with Arthur Chaskalson as Junior Counsel.

I was extremely fortunate when, through a chance conversation on the steps of the court, Ruth Hayman discovered from another lawyer that Patrick Abel Mthembu had been involved in another case where he had claimed, under oath, to be somewhere else during our time in China. That saved the day for me, as well as the fact that Lionel Gay, after giving evidence against Mac and his comrades, had been released and the underground had helped to get him out of the country. So, when my trial finally began, Mthembu was the only state witness. My defence counsel Cecil Margo subjected him to a

severe cross-examination, destroying his credibility beyond rehabilitation. I set out below a fragment of the encounter between Counsel and Mthembu:

> You are not above a little perjury. You have committed perjury, you lied under oath from time to time, have you not? You have lied under oath. We have had that already, is that right? —— I do not understand you.
> You have given false evidence in Court. We will not go over that again, you admitted it now. You are a traitor to South Africa, are you not/Are you not? —— I am not.
> Well that is a matter that others will judge. You are a traitor even to the people with whom you conspired to commit treason, are you not? —— I might be.
> And do you now still say that you are not prepared to give false evidence when the occasion suits? —— The evidence that I gave here that I was in China is the true evidence. I have given no lies evidence.
> Listen to my question please – are you prepared to give false evidence when it suits you to do so? —— I am not prepared to.
> BY THE COURT TO WITNESS: You did on one occasion when you said you were in Basutoland and you were not. You did that to suit yourself for whatever reason it may be, I do not know. You did, did you not? —— I did. I did not understand the question. I thought you said, when the occasion suits me next time again.
> Well, that was the occasion and it suited you. How am I to know that the occasion does not suit you now? —— I haven't got an answer.
> CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. MARGO (CONTINUED):
> And you kept out of being charged from time to time with these various crimes, very serious crimes by turning State evidence, by giving evidence for the State. Have you not? —— I think I gave evidence for the State as far as I know.
> Just answer the question! You kept your own skin safe by giving evidence for the State? —— Yes.
> And that is the only way you have been able to do so? Otherwise you too would have been charged, is that right? —— Yes.[11]

Judgement was delivered on the 1 March 1965, three days before my 32nd birthday. The judge came to the conclusion that the witness's answers under cross-examination were such that no reasonable person could possibly believe him and that there was no evidence on which a reasonable man might convict.

The next question the Judge asked was whether he should exercise his discretion in my favour. The State had produced only one witness and the Judge did not believe that the State would be able to produce new evidence to rehabilitate this sole, now discredited, witness. The case against me was discharged and I was declared 'not guilty'.

I was extremely lucky to have been charged on my own after Lionel Gay had been removed from the country. I recently learnt, while consulting the archives, that I was listed as one of a number of 'co-conspirators' in *The State vs Wilton Mkwayi and Others*, specifically named in four acts for which Mac Maharaj was charged and convicted.[12]

11. *The State v Nandha Gopal Naidoo*, in the Supreme Court of South Africa (Witwatersrand Local Division) Case No 71/65. UWL, Historical Papers, Trials, Court Records 1958–1978, AD1901, Box 35.2, The State v Nandha Gopal Naidoo, in the Supreme Court of South Africa (Witwatersrand Local Division) Case No 71/65.
12. *The State v Wilton Mkwayi and Others*, in the Supreme Court of South Africa (Witwatersrand Local Division), UWL, Historical Papers, AK2520, Boxes 29–30, The State v Wilton Mkwayi and Others, in the Supreme Court of South Africa (Witwatersrand Local Division), 1964, Annexure D to Indictment, 8–12.

I was free but another ordeal awaited me. I had to deal with the trauma of the interrogation, and solitary confinement. Apart from the brief period I was held with Wilton, Mac, Laloo Chiba and Paul Joseph as a prisoner awaiting trial, following their conviction and Paul Josephs' release, I was alone. I also had to contemplate the prospect of being placed under house arrest. I had no home or income. Most of the people among whom I would have to live would have been too afraid to come near me.

Home

I returned home to my father's farm. Very early the next morning, Amos, an elderly African who had known me since childhood, often bringing me sweets from the Mount Albert shop where he lived with the Tayob family, came to my room. He said, 'When a son returns, we usually slaughter a goat. I don't have a goat but I am here'. We talked and, for the first time, I learnt how aware he was of what was happening in the world of the disempowered. This trust and affection meant a huge amount to me. I have on my desk a gift from Amos, a guineafowl carved in wood.

A little later my father also came to my room and advised me to get to work lest the police think that they had finished me. I followed his advice and returned to Durban that morning, presenting myself at J.N. Singh's. I knew it would not be for long.

Shortly afterwards, I was called for interview by the security police who were preparing to issue me with banning and restriction orders. I subsequently heard that they intended putting me under house arrest. The order would have placed me in an impossible position as I would have been prohibited from working for J.N. Singh because he too was subject to controls as 'a listed and restricted communist'. With Mac in jail, and indeed the entire leadership of the resistance decimated, there was little I could do, and I made the decision to leave South Africa.

Making it over the border

I had to act quickly before my restriction papers were delivered. I made one attempt, getting as far as Johannesburg to Paul Joseph, hoping to arrange transport from there to the Bechuanaland border. But when that failed, I had to hurry back to Durban by hitching lifts so that my absence from work wouldn't alert the police. I then contacted M.P. Naicker, a banned leading member of the Natal Indian Congress, Treason Trialist and organiser of many campaigns who had been arrested many times. After being persuaded to leave with me, M.P. arranged a car and driver who would drive us non-stop to the border and drop us off close to where we could make our way on foot through the bush to Lobatse.

We left on Easter Friday, 16 April 1965, travelling all afternoon and through the night with the intention of arriving just before light. Our driver dropped us at a point we hoped was about two miles from the South African border post. He was so agitated that when he turned the car, it stalled. We had to push-start the car and the driver sped away. It was very early dawn as we walked into the bush. After a while, M.P. asked me to climb a tree to check our direction. Neither of us had brought a compass. When I saw a well made road ahead, I thought it must be the road leading to Lobatse. Strange though it may seem, I hadn't envisaged how we would cross a physical border! However, M.P. quickly assessed

that we were somehow walking back to the South African border control road. We needed to change direction, going deeper into the bush.

Finally, we arrived at a high barbed wire fence. Beyond this was a stretch of No Man's Land and then another barbed wire fence in the distance. M.P. now said that he had forgotten to carry a wire cutter. Having not even considered carrying one, I just set about climbing over. The tricky part was getting over the top. When my coat snagged on the wire, M.P. managed to help me get free. I should now have waited for him to clear this first fence, but with my adrenalin pumping, I jumped down. I was already running for the next fence when I realised that M.P's coat had snagged too. I was about to come back when he fortunately released himself and we were able to climb over the second fence together.

Lobatse, Bechuanaland

Once across, we walked at a slower pace to Lobatse, going straight to the police station to ask for political refuge. This was granted, subject to our reporting to the police regularly. The country was in a state of transition from its British Protectorate status with transformation into independent Botswana still another 18 months away.

We had arrived in the clothes we were wearing and with little money. M.P. had paid the man who drove us to the border and I asked my father to reimburse the Naicker family, which he did. I was lucky leaving with M.P., a reliable travelling companion with a cool head. Furthermore, he knew Maulvi Cachalia and Dan Tloome who was running the ANC mission.

Our nerves were fraught. The first thing we did was buy a bottle of brandy but since we were going to see Maulvi Cachalia we decided to leave the bottle with some friends of M.P. Later we collected our drink. No matter how much we drank, it seemed to have no effect. We were convinced that the brandy had been diluted with water! However, I felt something dribbling down from my knee. It was blood from cutting myself on the razor wire fence. Somehow the tension had stopped the wound from bleeding earlier. Dan Tloome offered us accommodation in his garage and the Cachalias kindly fed us. Later, we found a cottage to accommodate us and new refugees who kept arriving and we were able to look after ourselves. Afterwards I left the others to live on my own in a rondvel near the railway station.

It took me a while to find work, with my father in the meantime coming to the rescue by sending 40 rand a month along with a 'To Whom It May Concern' note, stating that he would do this until I found suitable employment. Bechuanaland was still legally administered by Britain. Although South Africa had left the Commonwealth, we knew that the British and South African police shared information. As refugees, our position was insecure. I considered applying for a residence permit for which I would require references. My brother Boya went to J.N. Singh, asking if he would provide a letter stating that I had been employed by him as an articled clerk. His answer 'No' took my brother and me by surprise. He had been satisfied with my work, so it must have been concern about repercussions. Since I had no references to support an application for a residence permit, I abandoned the idea.

After my release from jail, I had hardly seen my father. Of course I hadn't been able to tell him that I was leaving the country, but had rung home once I was safely in Lobatse.

From then on, I tried to ring every week. Many times, I would spend hours waiting for the calls to go through and, at the farm, my father would sit waiting for the phone to ring. The calls had to go through several telephone exchanges and sometimes they never got through. On one occasion, my brother wrote scolding me for promising to call my father, then not doing so, leaving him very disappointed. It was frustrating at both ends. I dearly wanted to spend some time with my father and asked if he could come to Botswana. I didn't know what the future held. Sadly, my dad was unable to make the journey.

After a while, I found work with a man we called Jumbo, a Hollander. He ran a business selling electrical goods such as radios and erecting electrical installations. Gabarone was being built and he did most of the electrical wiring of the offices and homes. He was a very decent man. When I asked for a modest sum as my wage, his response was that I couldn't live on that amount and he offered me more.

However, one Saturday morning, I lost my temper with him. The shop was full and for some reason we were both feeling irritable. A customer was buying a new record-player and I'd taken it out of its box to check whether it was working properly. We'd experienced some problems before. Some of the radios we were receiving for sale were leaving the factory defective. I decided that the cartridge in the arm of the record-player wasn't giving an adequate signal and was about to replace it with another one. I was showing and explaining this to the customer when Jumbo yelled at me, 'What are you doing?' This triggered something in me and, without thinking, I threw the screwdriver in my hand towards him and walked out. Now I was minus a job. A week later, Jumbo came to my lodgings. 'I knew my big mouth was going to get me into trouble one day. Now I have lost a good technician. Would you come back?' he asked. So I returned. There was no hard feeling between us.

Most of the refugees in our cottage eventually found jobs. We managed to organise our domestic routine but, while I stayed there, we didn't organise ourselves politically, nor did we have in-depth political discussions. Instead, I recall spending a lot of time with others in the bar, drinking. One day, I went to the liquor store and bought a bottle of brandy – not cheap – and then went on to the book store. I picked up a book, looked at the price and put it back on the shelf, thinking that it was too expensive. Yet it was less than the brandy. The shock of what I had done suddenly struck me. I had to do something. My current intellectual environment was sterile. I had to begin the process of rebuilding my life. But where?

My employer was thinking of getting a licence from the incoming Botswana government to build radios and asked if I would be interested in joining him in the enterprise. At about the same time, Mike Dingake of the ANC conveyed that he had been asked to request that I remain in the country. I asked, 'Why, what do they want me to do and when?' He didn't know. He had just been the messenger. But the manner and tone of the message suggested that if I agreed to hold on, I could expect to wait like the cipher who had been asked about going to China without being fully briefed. Even allowing for the difficulties in communication with ANC and MK people scattered in different countries, I had no sense of being actively engaged like a thinking cadre, yet I would be putting my life on the line.

I didn't underestimate the challenges of communication, the focus of my radio training in China. In December 1965, Mike Dingake was himself arrested – kidnapped – by Rhodesian security police while trying to make his way by train to Lusaka to meet ANC

leaders who had requested him to come. Illegally handed over to the South Africans, despite his being a 'British protected' Bechuanaland citizen, he subsequently spent 15 years on Robben Island. His autobiography is revealing. Mike had been under intense surveillance. He knew that Bechuanaland was still a satellite of South Africa, and Rhodesia had just declared UDI. Yet he made the journey, at the leaders' request, despite his own assessment that travelling across Rhodesia would be 'reckless. A senseless adventure destined to culminate in disaster. The sixth sense contested with my blind sense of loyalty'.[13] What was the intellectual culture that made him feel like that, acting contrary to his better judgment and knowledge? Was it that the organization simply required obedience, with any critique being interpreted as lack of trust in one's leaders?

I wasn't privy to all this at the time, but I could feel that something was wrong. The absence of serious political dialogue and discussion was nothing to do with our differing levels of education but more deeply a matter of attitude that included deference to age and seniority, plus the view that we should trust our leaders in all matters and that 'our leaders will decide and tell us'. The fear of revealing information to apartheid agents, who were undoubtedly among us, was a further stifling element. Yet without the free interchange of ideas, debate and criticism, sometimes, to the point of discomfort, you cannot cultivate an organization of intellectually robust cadres who are capable of thinking on their feet and responding to the challenges presented by a powerful enemy.

I decided to leave, disregarding the request-cum-order to wait. Needing help, I contacted Vella Pillay who sought the assistance of the human rights activist Martin Ennals whom I had met through anti-apartheid activity in London, and who would become Secretary General of Amnesty International in 1969. Martin Ennals made arrangements for me to be articled at the solicitors' firm Birnberg and Company and facilitated permission for me to come to Britain without a passport. The entry documentation and the money to buy an air ticket were delivered to me in Lobatse by a friend of his. My fare, I discovered later, was paid for by the Pillays.

As I needed to travel via Zambia, I wrote to the Zambian authorities, asking for permission to enter and leave to remain there a week before flying on to London. My brother Bala, who had cleared out the incriminating documents on the farm, was now practising medicine in Lusaka, where he would also become the ANC doctor. I wanted to have a little time with him.

Departure for Lusaka, Zambia

I got no reply from the Zambian authorities. Nevertheless, I thought that they might be accommodating. Zambia was now independent. As a student in London I had spent many hours demonstrating and campaigning for the cause of African independence. I decided to proceed on my journey without rearranging my flights. I was to take a Botswana Airways flight from Lobatse to Lusaka which would leave from the football ground outside Lobatse. I waited at the scheduled time but no aircraft appeared. Fortunately a light aircraft belonging to Botswana Airways was parked on the ground and the pilot, learning of what

13. M. Dingake, *My Fight Against Apartheid* (London: Kliptown Books. 1987), 88.

had happened, flew me to Maung where I stayed overnight before taking a flight to Livingstone the next day.

On arrival, my bag was searched by an immigration officer whose accent I recognised as Scottish. I explained my position but was immediately served with a notice, dated 1 June 1966, declaring me a prohibited immigrant. The officer told me that I would be allowed to take my flight to Lusaka, but not in the way I thought. I was escorted to the local prison where I found myself with five other prisoners: four Zambians, two white and two black, and an Englishman. The two black Zambians spent a lot of time at a desk studying. I was curious to know why they were locked up. Embezzling state funds, they replied. However, they weren't worried, telling me openly that they would soon be back in government.

Later in the day, I was taken under escort to Livingstone's airport. On arrival at Lusaka, I was met by a policeman who took me to the capital's prison where I remained until the date of my flight to London. On the morning of my departure, a pleasant young Zambian arrived as my police escort. We talked. I told him of my participation in the struggle for Zambian independence, my imprisonment in South Africa and the circumstances of my leaving. The outcome of our conversation was that he took me to my brother's home. To my surprise and delight, I found my father there. My brother Bala had arranged for him to visit during the week that I was meant to be there. I was able to spend a couple of hours with my dad and have a bath and a meal before the policeman, who had stayed throughout, escorted me to my evening flight to London. Bala brought my dad to the airport where we embraced. It was the last time I would see him. He died two months later.

Return to London

I arrived in London on 6 June 1966 to begin the work of rebuilding my life. The mourning following the death of both my parents started after I returned to Britain and remains with me even now. I was unable to fulfil the promise I had made to my father when I left South Africa: that I would return if he needed me. I was not there in his hour of need and couldn't be found when my mother wanted to see me before she died. In spite of everything, my father stood beside me.

My political views hadn't changed but I no longer had the same time to devote to politics as previously. The international political climate in which South African exiles were functioning had also changed. The South African Communist Party had been affected by the Sino-Soviet dispute. This made no sense to me. As a friend of Vella Pillay who continued to work for the Bank of China and who was now side-lined, and because of my training in China, I had the feeling that the SACP leaders didn't trust me. True, I had never become a party member, but I had put myself at the disposal of those who were fighting apartheid.

Joe Slovo, a leading member of MK and the SACP, asked to see me. We met in the pub by East Finchley station where he asked whether I had received the message to remain in Lobatse. I said that I had but had decided not to remain. He didn't ask why, or what I had gone through, or was going through. We didn't speak for long. It was the first and last time that I met him. I was a cog in a machine, unresponsive to unexplained orders.

Either later in 1966 or in 1967, I was called to a meeting in the home of Dr Yusuf Dadoo. It appeared to be for 'South African Indians' living in London, including Dr Frene Ginwala. We were told that a decision had been taken to drop references to the Congress Alliance and that all future reference was to be to the ANC. At this stage, 'Indians' were not accepted as members of the ANC. When Vella Pillay asked some questions, the response from Frene Ginwala was that we did not trust our leaders. Again we were being told to trust our leaders, not to ask questions.

In London, I continued to support the Anti-Apartheid movement, later setting up with others two small but active Anti-Apartheid groups that met in our home, first in Watford, then in Bournemouth. The Anti-Apartheid movement had a transformative effect in the countries where it mobilised ordinary members of the public to put pressure on their governments to condemn and boycott apartheid. It was a broad movement that also provided a rallying point in the struggle against racism and discrimination within those countries. By contributing to the idea of apartheid as a crime against humanity, its efforts had a significant influence on the outcome of the struggle in South Africa.

Nevertheless, when the ANC finally opened its membership to South Africans of all backgrounds in 1985, while being prepared to offer support in one way or another, I did not feel inclined to become a member of an organisation that, despite its ideals of equality, seemed locked into a top-down structure that did not encourage independent thinking, debate, exploration of ideas and initiative.

Anticipating that Mac would need some help upon his release from prison at the end of 1976, I wrote to my brother Boya in South Africa asking him to offer Mac some assistance which he did. My brother left some money with his clothes at the offices of Kisoon Singh, Attorneys, in Lakhani Chambers, Durban. Mac returned to MK and the underground struggle, occasionally coming to London. Our contact was sporadic but after his second marriage to Zarina and the birth of their two children, family ties developed with them sometimes staying with us in England and our children becoming closer. At one time, Mac asked me whether I would be prepared to receive and deliver to the ANC in London messages from South Africa. I agreed and bought a tape recording machine for that purpose although this was not ultimately needed.

Our friendship went back to our University days. When Mac was arrested in July 1990, following the unravelling of the Vula operation, I went to Brighton and brought the children and Zarina to stay with us in Bournemouth. We also agreed to take care of the children if something were to happen to Mac and Zarina. When Mac went into the new government as Minister of Transport, we remained in occasional contact.

Recently, however, I read an interview Mac gave to Howard Barrell in November 1990. The interview had taken place not long after his family had been staying with us at the stressful time of his arrest. When my name comes up in the interview in relation to China, Howard Barrell asks, 'Where's he now? Is he around?' Mac tells him, 'He became disgruntled and vanished. He was a friend of mine'. Our relationship was not what I thought it was. I recall Mac telling me many years ago that the daily process of applying one's mind to prevail over the apartheid government distorted the way one thought. This raises questions that I'm not equipped to answer.

Conclusion

The apartheid state and its doctrine of white supremacy is now history. The first stage of the struggle has been accomplished. The realisation of the second phase of the struggle, that is giving people access to justice, health care, education, nourishment and protection from the elements, remains to be accomplished.

The colonial enterprise which began in 1652 and the resistance to it inflicted mental and physical pain on the people and one can only hope that, in time, they will heal and that new generations will progress to adult life unscarred by their parents' history. The question that remains, however, is whether people who have been shaped by participating in a violent and barbarous struggle of resistance are best equipped to lead the next phase of the struggle.

It was not a good omen that the report of the Macro Economic Research Group (MERG) was abandoned without discussion before the ANC government even came to power. Vella Pillay, who led MERG, wrote in his preface to the report,

> Particular mention needs to be made of the contributions from our 13 research teams based at the Universities of Fort Hare, Durban-Westville, the North Western Cape and Witwatersrand. These teams produced a large number of working papers ... As a result of the efforts of these research teams some 45 graduates and others have developed their capacity to undertake research in a number of disciplines related to economics.[14]

The research undertaken to produce the MERG report had echoes of Mao Zedong's advice to us to study our own situation. Because they were economists involved in the study of development, however, they were labelled socialist and their work dismissed without discussion. The learning and experience the research assistants had gained was disregarded in favour of free market economics coming from the Chicago school of Milton Friedman, the World Bank and the IMF.

Nevertheless, there are two elements that give me hope in South Africa. The first is that there remain people dedicated to producing a vibrant civil society in a country still deeply scarred by its racialised and divided past. The second is that when I visit South Africa and go into schools with my wife Beverley, where I sit as an observer in workshops with young South Africans of all backgrounds, both in urban and rural areas, I am impressed by the hunger for intellectual exploration. That hunger is waiting to be nourished.

My greatest debt to my parents was their encouragement in nurturing critical thinking while imparting the universal values of humanity and kindness. The problems South Africa has to address are not unique. They are problems faced by the poor, the wretched and impoverished through out the world. Those in power need to encourage intellectual freedom and a spirit of enquiry in the young who have to address the problems inherited from the past. There is no easy way out. There are no easy answers.

Acknowledgements

I thank Professor Raymond Suttner for reading the early drafts of this paper. His comments were helpful and encouraging.

14. Macroeconomic Research Group, *Making Democracy Work: A Framework for Macroeconomic Policy in South Africa* (Belville: Centre for Development Studies, University of the Western Cape, 1993), xvi.