

**Mandela Campaign Witness Seminar  
St Antony's College, Oxford, 1999**

Organised by Professor William Beinart and Mike Terry

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*Rusty Bernstein:* I feel I'm here under a slight misapprehension because I haven't got great reminiscences of the Anti-Apartheid Movement because I was only a very minor participant in it. My contribution such as it is relates to the period of Mandela prior to his imprisonment. There's a general misconception of Mandela's political career as finding its take-off point in the Rivonia Trial, and in particular in his great testament, which he made on the dock during that trial in 1964.

In fact this conception is, I think, the exact opposite of the truth. Mandela's career stretched back 15 years before the Rivonia Trial and it was a career of very considerable substance and importance in the whole history of South Africa. It covered the years from the time when the African National Congress itself was a tiny sect to the time when it had become probably the most important political organisation in the country, setting the agenda of the politics of the country, setting the pace for the whole liberation struggle as it subsequently developed. Now that 15-year career is documented in all the biographies and histories of the period, and the many honours and distinctions which were endowed on him during that period, in which he grew from a young lad who had just come in from the country into the most important political figure in the country.

I don't intend to run through his career at all, because it's all there to be read. All the honours, the position first of all as head of the African National Congress Youth, which was a tiny sect when he joined it, to his position as president of the Transvaal ANC, and ultimately to being one of the two or three leading figures in the national executive. And it runs through a whole host of activities and important events in the history of the liberation struggle and the Defiance Campaign, where he was appointed as the volunteer-in-chief and the chief organiser, through to the organisation which led to the Congress of the People, in which he was a major participant, to the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, and the beginning of the armed struggle.

Along the way, Mandela's own personal history is deeply wrapped up in the history of those times. And I had the good fortune, almost accidental, to meet up with him throughout those 15 years and associated with him on and off in some of the minor passages in his career. When I first met him – I encountered him, I think is the right expression, I didn't meet him, I first saw him – it was 1950, when I went to a meeting in Newclare township, Johannesburg, to support a speaker who was making a call on behalf of the Communist Party and the Council of Non-European Trade Unions for a strike on May Day, a protest strike. And he had come as the leader of the small group of the African National Congress Youth League to oppose the whole idea of the strike, and in fact to cat-call and to heckle and generally to disrupt the meeting as best they could. They were a small group and they didn't succeed completely, I think we carried the day. But I came away from the meeting with two impressions of him. First of all, that in some subtle way that I couldn't understand, he exercised a quiet authority over the rest of the Youth League. He wasn't in command, he wasn't in charge, he wasn't laying down laws for the rest of them, but somehow they were taking their line, they were taking their

activities, from him and he was exercising this quiet authority. And my other impression of him was that politically he had a very naive, almost basic nationalist ideology driving him, and not much more behind his politics except a sort of instinctive and uninformed anti-communism which was being expressed by the Youth League. In subsequent times, I had to change my opinions about quite a lot of that; not about the mystique by which he exercised his leadership, but about his politics. Because within a few months after that encounter I actually met him.

We were both working in an active campaign – a collaboration between the Communist Party and the ANC had been established to try and oppose the Suppression of Communism Act, still in the year 1950. And I recognised that he had had to suppress, contain his fundamental anti-communist attitudes in order to pursue the greater good of combating the Suppression of Communism Act, which threatened the future existence of both organisations. He did it with good grace and he entered into the campaign with a great deal of vigour and energy, and I began to realise that this is a man who has more than I first understood, more in his political make-up and in his character than I'd first appreciated. He was growing, he was learning, he was developing and adapting himself to new experiences that he was having. And this is something I saw throughout the years that I was in contact with him, that he never stayed still in his growth and development.

He had started when I first met him with a great deal of unease in the presence of white people. He was not accustomed to them, he'd come from the countryside. He was suspicious of the motives of white radicals and uncertain how to deal with them. That soon wore off, he grew out of that too, possibly aided by the fact that his legal practice was beginning to take off, and he was coming into contact with whites not only in politics, but in the courts, and having to deal with them. And he was growing to a position where within a very short space of time, he had a tremendous confidence and self-assurance, that he was as good as anybody else, he didn't have to defer and would not defer to anybody else. He was at ease with himself and in the company of alien characters like white citizens of South Africa, white radicals. I used to meet him occasionally in the street when he passed, as I did many other radical black politicians I knew quite well at the time. The others tended in the street to be rather withdrawn and cautious in their relations with one. It was a time after all when black people were being regularly harassed in the street by aggressive whites and being pushed off pavements. So they would tend to be rather withdrawn, rather private, not too effusive. At the time, in the 1950s where he describes himself in his autobiography as changing from a country boy into a city man who wore smart suits, by that time he had already acquired this self-confidence, sureness with himself, no arrogance or pride, but sureness about himself and his position in society, that he would greet a white person like myself in exactly the same way that he would greet his family or any of his close friends. A big handshake, a great beaming smile, a greeting, sometimes a bear hug, totally unprepared to back off in order to accommodate the general climate of people in the street. This self-confidence and sureness grew and developed throughout his career. I saw it grow and grow and mature into the leader he became by the end of it.

We spent on one occasion we were together, on a committee, it was a sub-committee of the four congresses, that is the African National Congress, the Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats and the Congress of Trade Unions, and a fifth, the Congress of Coloured People. Of these five organisations it was a sub-committee appointed by a joint meeting of the national executives. He was appointed chairman of the Resolutions Committee to try and reconcile all the different views about the next step to be taken by the liberation movement. Then I saw another side of Mandela, another growing side, that he had changed from this rather instinctive, not very subtle politician of the Newclare meeting into a diplomat. He was the chairman of this committee. It was a difficult committee, trying to resolve many points of view. He did it with enormous patience and tact. He listened, rather than laid down his own opinion, and he managed there to develop the skills of reconciliation and of reaching consensus which has characterised the whole of his career since. This was another facet of his growth.

Some time later, from 1956, I spent two, three, I don't know how many years, almost every working day, with him and 154 others in the Treason Trial. During that time I got to him in all sorts of different moods. In his moments of triumph, his moments of defeat, upbeat, confident, looking forward, and the moments when he was stricken with despair, and I came to know and understand something of the character of this man which really set him apart from the 154 others. At the end of that period of the Treason Trial, he was appointed to head the organising committee, again for a big national strike, this time against the declaration of the South African Republic in 1960.

For this purpose it was fortuitous the Treason Trial had finished and banning orders which had dogged him all his life had expired, and he was able to participate openly in the conference which led to that strike decision. In order to organise that strike he had disappeared into hiding and was living underground in Johannesburg. From time to time I would meet with him, casually, irregularly, and I was able to watch the development of another side of his character. He had been during the Treason Trial one of the key spokesmen for the defence, based on the premise that the liberation movement had at all times been totally non-violent. It was, I believe, a genuine part of his ideology at that time, influenced by Gandhian principles and pragmatic considerations that the movement was and should be non-violent. But during that strike and after that strike, I could see the shift in his political thinking, a growth if you like in his thinking, to encompass perhaps more violent forms of struggle. Most of us will have seen the video clip which is being shown repeatedly on British television, but which was never shown in South Africa, of Mandela immediately after that strike, which was intended to last for several days. He had had to undertake perhaps the most difficult task that ever overtakes a political leader, and that was to come out in public, and to announce that the action that he had worked for, and called for, to which he had pinned his public reputation, had failed, and to take the courageous step of calling it off before any further damage was done. Immediately thereafter, he appeared in an interview on television which was shown in this country, not in South Africa because there was no television, and he was backed against a wall looking very dismayed and disconsolate and making that statement which has been repeated time and time again, in which he says: 'If the government is to crush

by naked force our non-violent struggle, we will have to reconsider our tactics. In my mind we are closing a chapter on non-violent policy.'

Here again, in this statement, he was the first to give public voice to an idea which was gaining currency in the political movement, that non-violence had outlived its tenure of life, that new tactics had to be engaged. I was in touch with him while he was living underground, because his underground existence went on for some time. As he developed and refined this first gut feeling he had had about the movement into a policy which led, finally, to the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the start of sabotage, in which he was the commander-in-chief. Immediately after that event, he disappeared from South Africa entirely. He was sent abroad by the African National Congress, he did a major tour of Europe, he came back to South Africa for only a couple of days, he was arrested, charged with leaving the country without a permit, convicted and jailed.

He vanished from that moment on into the complete silence of Robben Island, from which no interview or report could come out, from which no pictures existed; he had been removed from the world. There was a 15-year career in politics, to the age of 45, by which age most successful politicians in the world would be looking to reap their rewards by way of ambassadors posts, or at least MPs, Cabinet ministers, generals, presidents. Here was this man who suddenly at the age of 45 became a nonentity and disappeared from sight. His career of 15 years does not appear to be part of his meteoric rise in later times because it was lived throughout under a shadow of censorship and a blanket of silence, which South Africa maintained for all the goings on of the black liberation movement. The press was exclusively concerned with white affairs, ignored totally anything that was going on in the black population, its politics, its social development, except of course for crimes and major disasters. Television was not permitted, radio was a propaganda monopoly of the state and used as such, and allowed no spotlight to fall on what was happening outside the white establishment.

So Mandela's career, although distinguished, which made him probably the best known politician amongst the black population, and certainly amongst the activists in the movement, was lived out under this grey blanket of silence. Therefore even at the height of his career in the movement, prior to the Rivonia trial, he was virtually unknown to the wider South African society outside. I doubt if even one in 1,000 South Africans had heard of him. Inside the movement he had become its most important politician.

And so, to Rivonia. It seemed to me that that our two careers were like trains running on separate tracks, starting from different positions, making for the same destination, sometimes getting closer to each other, sometimes running adjacent to each other, sometimes stopping at the same stations, and then moving apart again, until ultimately we reached the terminal of both our careers, which was the Rivonia trial. Here again one saw the particular character of Mandela which had developed over all these years as a leader. He had developed gradually the concept of a leader not as one who earns rewards, or special privileges, but as one who acquires special obligations and deeper duties, and runs special risks than anybody else. This was his concept of leader and he followed it throughout his career, if you track it back through all the highlights in his

career, this was the way he led; and this was the way he opted to lead during the Rivonia trial.

Against our better judgements, he decided he would go into the dock and explain completely the basis for the political movement's change from non-violent to violent tactics, his own part in it and the role he had played. We (the accused and the lawyers) tried to dissuade him from adding to this testimony the little tailpiece which he threw out as a challenge to the judge, saying: These are the things I've stood for throughout my life, and these are the things I'm prepared to die for. It was an extremely risky challenge, which placed his own life in jeopardy, as he knew full well. This was one of the obligations he felt that as a leader he could not duck. His movement outside was in a state of retreat after the arrests at Rivonia. The government was cutting a swathe through its ranks and the movement was beginning its retreat. He felt it was his obligation to set an example of courage, of resistance, of determination to carry on.

That was the moment at which the lid closed on this prestigious career, the lid came down and shut him off completely from the world. From Robben Island, where he was for 27 years, we heard not a word for 20 years, saw nothing, nothing could be quoted from what he wrote, no pictures, the man had disappeared from the living world. And yet paradoxically, and it's one of the miracles, the mysteries of our time, that after 20 years the lid began to lift on this coffin that he was enclosed in on Robben Island, and he began the next phase of his career, which was the emergence of a major international statesman, a global icon, the most important, most celebrated political prisoner of all time. And that paradox needs some explaining, which I'm not going to do, but which I take it today's meeting will do.

I suggest to you there were three strands to it. There was the man himself and his exceptional character and personality. There was the organisation behind him, the African National Congress, which managed to maintain its unity, its spirit of resistance, its principles, throughout the 27 years he was in prison, largely because of the leadership of his exceptional colleague and one time law partner, Oliver Tambo. The third reason was the phenomenal campaign run by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which raised this man from a local politician into an international statesman of great substance.

I would like to give two little anecdotes of the man which I think illustrate his character. The first is in Pretoria Prison in 1964, when the nine accused in the treason trial were assembled in one of the prison yards waiting for the vehicle to arrive, an armoured steel vehicle which used to carry us every morning to the court for the court session, in an armed convoy with armed guards. A discussion started there in the yard between us and some of the warders. We were making a serious protest, but not in an aggressive or fighting manner, about their insistence that we should be handcuffed before we were put into the sealed steel armour-plated and armed, escorted vehicle. Mandela made his point of view quite clear. We were talking to a young warder, Afrikaans speaking, badly educated, probably never heard of Mandela until the day he arrived as a convicted prisoner from Robben Island in prison garb and was locked into a cell under this warder's authority. This young warder was listening to our protest and I remember him clear as

day saying to Mandela: 'That's all very well, Mandela, but when your time comes, you'll do the same to us'. The year was 1964, his time didn't come for 28 years after, but this warder already had a feeling for this man who otherwise would have been the lowest form of life in a prison, a convicted prisoner, on trial again as public enemy number one, with a death sentence quite patently ahead of him.

The second anecdote was the occasion when Mandela was released from prison. He had been out of prison for only a couple of weeks and he came to Harare on his first visit outside South Africa. We happened to be in Harare quite accidentally at the same time. He was due to arrive at the airport quite early in the morning, but there was trouble with the planes in South Africa, he had to change planes halfway. He arrived at Harare instead of 10 o'clock at noon. There were massive crowds there to meet him, who had lined up ten deep all round the airfield. He came out the plane into the blazing sun, he had to meet Mugabe and all the top brass of the Zimbabwe state and their wives. He then had to walk past solemnly inspecting the Zimbabwean guard of honour. He then chose to walk along the rope enclosure that held the crowd back from the airfield, all the way round, best part of a mile, shaking hands, recognising old friends, calling greetings and receiving greetings, by which time it was past noon and he was due at a banquet in his honour where he had to make a speech. He got rushed off to that, from there he got carted off unwillingly to the new ZANU headquarters, a multi-storey building in the centre of town, where he had to make a floor by floor inspection, giving a great photo opportunity for Mugabe, not for Mandela – a gruelling schedule. Sometime in the afternoon (he had seen Hilda in the crowd at the airport) we got an invitation to come down and see him at the house he was staying in, a state grace and favour house. Living room bigger than this room, great big stuffed leather oversized settees and chairs, great big tables, an army of servants coming and bringing drinks and peanuts and snacks and putting them on tables, and we chatted, and he was obviously exhausted, near the end of his tether. Yet he had to go on in an hour's time to another banquet where all the great and the good of Zimbabwean society were going to be present, with more speeches. I could see all he wanted to do was sleep. While we chatted a little girl aged 9 or 10 sidled in and came and sat on one of these leather settees and sat there just staring at the great man that she'd heard about, listening with great big eyes. And Mandela got up out of his chair, he didn't ring for a servant, walked across the large room, got a bowl of peanuts and a bowl of crisps, took them across to this little girl, knelt down and offered them to her. I thought to myself, this is what makes this man exceptional. He's a great politician, a great statesman, but above all he's a great human being, and that is my lasting impression of him which will never vanish.

*Anthony Sampson:* I won't try to compete with Rusty's marvellous first-hand account, but I thought it might be useful if I said a bit about the context of the Mandela campaigns, as I've seen it in doing Mandela's authorised biography which I've just finished and is published next month, using some of the sources that I've accumulated during the writing of the book, because it is quite difficult, I think, to look back and to feel oneself back to the atmosphere of the time, particularly when he went to jail.

Rusty quite rightly made the point that the prisoners were very soon forgotten, as they were meant to be, and I hope very much that Ahmed Kathrada, who is with us today, who of course saw the whole situation, can add something to what I have to say. Because of course it was the agony of seeing themselves forgotten about in jail that was a tremendously difficult part of the ordeal. It is important to remember how thorough that forgetfulness was. It's interesting to look at the secret correspondence of the British diplomats at the time of the Rivonia trial and before that, particularly to notice that Mandela had no contact with any western diplomat before he went to jail in 1962. Although they were beginning to realise that he had some importance, they did not want to offend the South African government.

They were amazingly cautious and usually very insensitive about the importance of the black opposition, although some of them did see the need to 'reinsure' themselves, as they said, against the possibility of a black government in the future. There was an interesting discussion within the Foreign Office in London about whether or not they should make contact with black opposition leaders, but in effect they hardly did. They didn't try to talk to Mandela or any other of the main opposition leaders, although they did talk to one or two of them in exile. This contributed of course to a kind of weakness of will in terms of the Rivonia pressures itself. There were some attempts, there were some suggestions that they should lobby the South African government to avoid a death sentence at the time of Rivonia. The documentation there is particularly interesting because in fact Douglas-Home, who was at the time Prime Minister, rather surprisingly did want to lobby. The British diplomats who were in the field at Pretoria were against it, thought it would be counter-productive, which was always a favourite diplomat's excuse for not doing very much. What is interesting to remember is that the imprisonment of Mandela and the others at the Rivonia trial was seen by many as simply a part of the broader African epic that Africa was after all full of prison graduates, who had served some time in prison, and many people, including the British diplomats, thought that this would be the same kind of operation. Although the Rivonia trial was horrific and the outcome was appalling, nevertheless in legal terms it was more respectable than some other trials which had happened. For instance in Kenya, where Kenyatta was sentenced to jail a few years before, the governor actually had to bribe the judge to make sure that he reached the right decision, which as far as we know did not happen in South Africa.

As a result of that sequence of prison graduates – Nkrumah, Kenyatta and others – some British diplomats thought that Mandela would in fact before long emerge and would even provide a useful dialogue between the government and the black opposition. After that initial period of slightly complacent negligence came a period of almost complete forgetfulness. The extent of that is interesting to look at. Kathy himself and others have referred to the extent to which they were forgotten. I remember having a letter from George Bizos, who was one of Mandela's counsel, saying specifically he was worried about how to keep people in the public mind. He said, 'We earnestly hope that they do not become forgotten men', and he wrote that to me in London just after the Rivonia trial. And Kathrada I quote as having said he was told by prisoner warders, 'No-one will know the name Mandela in five years time' (in 1964). In the British papers, the name Mandela very quickly disappeared. He had achieved some fame during the Rivonia trial,



particularly the great speech. If you look through *The Times*, which was then quite a serious newspaper, it's fascinating to see how quickly references to Mandela disappear. In 1964 I read 58 references to Mandela, in 1965 two, in 1966 none, in 1967 four, in 1968 none, in 1969 two. And later on, in the mid-'70s, there were references to Mandela but many of those were to Winnie Mandela and not to Nelson. That is very important to remember in a contemporary discussion of Winnie and why she still has so much support, that not only was she extremely courageous during that time, but also she played a very crucial role in keeping the name of Mandela alive abroad, when it couldn't be published in South Africa.

While that forgetfulness was setting in, there's no doubt that the failures of any internal rebellion were adding to the general gloom and the belief that the ANC had simply disappeared, together of course with a tremendous Western interest in the South African boom, and the tone set by the *Economist* in a famous article of 1968, which said the richer South Africa became, the more liberal and left-wing they would become, and therefore we should pour money into South Africa. This was a general feeling, stimulated by an absolutely amazing growth rate, which encouraged British and American companies to pour in. That degree of forgetfulness makes the subsequent revival all the more remarkable. Soweto itself was an ambiguous event in that respect because it did of course bring back the whole black opposition and the injustice of apartheid into the public eye in Britain and America. The subsequent murder of Biko caused perhaps more indignation than even Rivonia had done, but the fact was that Soweto was originally the creation of the black consciousness movement and not of the ANC, and the links between the ANC and black consciousness at that point were tenuous. Here again, Winnie played a rather important role in that tenuous relationship. So, as Mandela himself has well documented, the actual relationships between the ANC and the black consciousness movement were very difficult, particularly when the BC came to Robben Island, and they had to work out some kind of relationship together.

All in all, the position was not at all hopeful and one has to keep on remembering how pessimistic it was. The fact again that in 1974 you had the collapse of the Portuguese empire, and the apparently very encouraging progress towards independence in Angola and Mozambique, was not as hopeful or as important as it appeared to many people to be at the time. One has to keep remembering what Mandela said, 'We are being buried alive', and how deep that burial appeared to be at the time. As to the actual build-up of the Free Mandela campaign, I'm not anything like as well-qualified to describe that as Mike Terry and others. Again it's important to remember how many false dawns there were since the momentum began at the end of 1980. In looking back on it, either as a biographer or as a historian, it's quite difficult to make sense of how long it took, that period. The timescale was enormous.

At the beginning of the 1980s in many ways it looked as if the movement ought to be pretty rapid. In fact, the South African authorities themselves were aware of Mandela's enormous importance and recognised many of his outstanding qualities in a way that would seem to imply that they would find it very difficult to keep him in jail for very long. In a report in the Department of Justice files, there is rather interesting analysis based on a

psychological profile, a kind of psycho-political profile of Mandela, which we now know was based on interviews and discussions with him beforehand. It lists all his strengths in a way which almost any ANC people would agree with. There exists, the document says, in Mandela all the qualities to be the number one black leader in South Africa. His period in prison has caused his psycho-political posture to increase rather than decrease, and with this he has now acquired the characteristic 'prison charisma' of the contemporary liberation leader. That private and confidential report coincided with new attempts to blacken him as a dangerous communist revolutionary who couldn't be trusted in control of foreign powers. That profile did not of course prevent him from remaining in jail, or you could say it made it more necessary for him to remain in jail, for ten more years.

Historically, it's important to look at what were the obstacles to the recognition that the solution could only come through the release of Mandela during the 1980s. The more I looked at it the more I felt that the Cold War, the misinformation and the extraordinary misunderstandings caused by the Cold War were a major aspect. In South Africa this was tremendously complicated, and deliberately complicated by Buthelezi. It was the build-up of Buthelezi by Mrs Thatcher and Laurens van der Post, who is shortly to be totally discredited as a serious observer, which managed to confuse the issue extremely effectively as far as the British public were concerned, and to make the job of the Anti-Apartheid Movement more difficult. The other point I wanted to make is that a lot of the effects of AAM and movements linked to it were indirect as much as direct. My own impression, and this is a personal view, was that the impact of the banking crisis, the withdrawal of loans by American bankers, paradoxical as it may seem, was a key element in the pressure on Pretoria. That was in 1985. Now people sometimes portray this as if it were the triumph of capitalist farsightedness coming to the rescue. In fact of course this banking withdrawal, starting with the Chase Manhattan Bank, was itself the result of extremely effective anti-apartheid movements. Both in Britain and in America in different ways, it was the ability of protesters to understand that by going for the investors, the shareholders and the depositors who were investing in South Africa, they could undermine the basis of that support.

It took some time to happen, and much of it was quite discreet and quite subtle. It was that which created the calculation by the totally unradical bankers of the Chase Manhattan. It was simply not worth their while to go on lending to South Africa if it was forfeiting the support of their shareholders and depositors. The means by which the campaigners brought this about, particularly in Britain, America and Holland, is one of the more surprising corridors of history. At the same time, public opinion was increasingly affected by the anti-apartheid protests and their impact on television screens, as many American politicians have told me, was enormous, because that affected indirectly all kinds of business contacts and business prospects. It also incidentally affected the children of the people making the decisions, as people tend to forget. There was a kind of unseen protest by the next generation who were saying 'Daddy how can you go on investing in that country when they're doing these things which I see on the screen'.

It will still be difficult to see who did the trick in terms of straightforward pressures, and this of course will be argued about for years. It will be all the more difficult because so

many of those pressures were indirect and in many ways all the more effective for being so. The last point I would like to make is the fascinating interrelationship between the myth and the man, in terms of the external attitudes towards Mandela and the actual political reality and the personal reality inside prison itself. Of course there was always the basic difficulty with someone who had been in jail for so long that the campaign on behalf of a so little known figure, in terms of what he was really like, would become an impossible conjunction, that the myth would become totally detached from any kind of reality. I remember attending the unveiling of the Mandela bust which still dominates the South Bank outside the Royal Festival Hall in London by Oliver Tambo in 1985, and there was this amazing figure, more than life-sized, which to my view bore absolutely no relationship to what he actually looked like at all. It was rather a caricature of the thick set, muscular, thick lipped black man, in a heroic posture, but with curiously insensitive features, it seemed to me. That symbolised to me what was the problem: that the Mandela myth would have a totally separate life from the real person.

One of the most fascinating parts of the story was the question: was it possible for the man inside the prison to live up to these massive expectations, some of which were rather crude, and not necessarily attractive, because the purely heroic figure is often a pretty uninteresting phenomenon? I remember my daughter, who was a campaigner, saying at the age of 18 she clearly foresaw the problem that when he came out of jail he would be something totally different, and almost certainly an anti-climax. To me perhaps the most interesting part of the story is that Mandela, from inside jail, was able to foresee that problem; he worried that he was expected to be a superman who could achieve anything, and he was determined to emerge as an ordinary person, with his ordinary failings and weaknesses and to be certain he always kept on the ground and had these ordinary relationships, particularly with children. That was one aspect of the campaign which was inherently quite dangerous, that you could have had an appalling anti-climax, when it turned out that Mandela was not like that, or more serious of course that he was fooled by his own mythology. That was the more worrying African precedent to my mind – the tragedy of so many African leaders from Nkrumah onwards, who were really drunk with their own flattery and the image they required, that they forgot that they were ordinary people, and totally isolated themselves both politically and psychologically.

*William Beinart:* I was wondering whether we could invite Mr Kathrada to contradict any point made so far – I feel as though we're having a conversation about Hamlet at which Horatio suddenly comes into the context.

*Ahmed Kathrada:* I think what this discussion has highlighted is the need for research, more and more research. I hate to differ with Rusty, but when Rusty talks of – and I may be differing with Mandela himself – the influence of Gandhi, I don't think I'd agree with that, that he was influenced by Gandhian principles. What he says in his autobiography, and what we discussed over and over again, is that his and the Youth League's move towards non-violent defiance was influenced more by the 1946 South African Indian Congress passive resistance than by Gandhi. Even if he was influenced by Gandhi, it would be to the limited extent of Gandhian methods of struggle, and not the philosophy. I don't think anywhere in his writings and discussions would he be agreeing with the

philosophy of Gandhi, turning the other cheek and so forth. Just to add a couple of anecdotes, when Rusty was talking about the 1950 meeting when preparations were being made for the May Day strike, I think it's that very meeting Rusty was talking about, that Mandela was sent by the Youth League not to ask questions but to disrupt the meeting, because the Youth League was so violently against that strike. And at that meeting he physically pulled down Joseph [name unclear] from the platform in order to disrupt the meeting.

A bit about people not remembering Mandela. Now you all know that as far as South Africa itself was concerned, there was legislation at the time which prohibited the media from in any way writing about prisons or prisoners, or even having a sketch of a prison – it was all illegal. I remember there was a court case in that regard and Benjamin Pogrund of the [Rand] *Daily Mail* served a seven-day sentence for writing about it. All this was to induce collective amnesia among the people, and this is what they said in so many words to us, that in five years time nobody will remember the name of Mandela.

There are one or two other points that I'm going to recite, and I hope that there will be research done. The 'Free Mandela' campaign: now I know, and it's even public knowledge, that there were even differences expressed on Robben Island by some individuals – why a 'Free Mandela' campaign, why not a 'Free all political prisoners' campaign? I don't know if that discussion originated on Robben Island, but it certainly was there. Linked to that is the question of the autobiography, *Long Walk To Freedom*; again, that book was written in prison and the intention was to have it published on his birthday. It was never published. A lot of work had been done, risks taken, to smuggle it out. This was not known to even the ANC members, apart from the leadership of the ANC, the four people and the technicians who were involved with the smuggling. Among us there was the discussion of the consequences to us of this book being written and published. It was a great risk, and we knew that as soon as the book was published they would come down hard on all of us, but in spite of that the decision was taken by the leadership that this book must be published. It never was, and again I think it would be good if some research was done as to why that book was never published when it was supposed to have been, on his birthday.

As far as the myth and the man is concerned, if I may add a bit of a commercial for myself here. On his 80th birthday last year I was asked to write an article by the Independent group of newspapers, I believe a brief version was published in England as well, but I was asked not to have a rehash of *Long Walk to Freedom* and I tried to bring out the man – he himself has repeatedly told us and many others that he is not a saint, as some people try to make out. In that little article we did try to highlight some of his weaknesses, strengths, his vanity, etc. It may help researchers to go more deeply into that.

One last anecdote which also brings out something about the man. Last year, 1998, I happened to visit Robben Island with Nadine Gordimer, and I was asked by a group of people to pose for a photograph with a little child. I didn't know anything about this child, but I usually joke with them, 'Will you pay me some money if I have a photo with you?'

Then it transpired that the child was dying of leukaemia, and there's an organisation called 'Reach for a dream', which tries to fulfil the last wishes of children. The last wish of this 12-year old child was to visit Robben Island and to meet the president. Well she visited Robben Island, but of course the president was not there. After that I spoke to the president and told him about the wish of this child and I suggested that we should bring her over to his office in Pretoria so he could meet her. He then said, No, that would not be correct; he would go to the child, so a week or two later he got into his helicopter and went to this child. The significance of this is that that child, and that family, is an Afrikaner family, from Secunda, which is a very Afrikaner, right-wing place. But when he went there, people turned out in their hundreds, white and black, to receive him.

Earlier that day, he visited the family of a six-month old child who was killed by a white farmer. He had gone there not because it was an African child, but because it was a child. The media in South Africa and the opposition in Parliament highlighted this visit to the parents of the six-month old child, because it was a black child. They never mentioned the visit that took place the same day to the parents of Michelle Brits, who was a white child. She died in October last year.

*Mike Terry:* I suppose I'm in a very different position from those who have spoken so far because I worked out I was about 14 when Mandela was first arrested. I've got no recollection of his arrest or of the Rivonia trial, and I can't really remember when I first knew who Mandela was. Before going to university, I worked as a teacher in a school in Zimbabwe and that's where I first began to have some understanding for and sympathy with African nationalism. I eventually became involved in campaigning in Birmingham at the students union, then subsequently when I was on the NUS Executive. In a way I should thank Jack Straw, now our Home Secretary, because I got elected onto the Executive, and there was a policy group who were responsible for organising the NUS's international policy, and the obvious person to go was the president of Manchester University, a guy called Dave Wynn, who now works at OUP. But he was in the Communist Party, and there was no way that Jack was going to agree that someone from the Communist Party served on this group. I was in those days perceived as being to the left of the Communist Party, if not further than that, and I was much more acceptable to be put onto this group, a kind of leftist student, as long as it wasn't anybody from the Communist Party. And because I'd got an involvement in Southern Africa I ended up with the Southern Africa responsibility, and in fact although we were implementing then a policy of support for the ANC and Anti-Apartheid in the NUS, as far as I can remember the first discussion I ever had about a campaign for Mandela's release was with two NUSAS leaders, Paul Pretorius and Neville Curtis, who came to London in 1971.

Their idea was that NUSAS should try to do something on the primarily English-speaking campuses in South Africa for the tenth anniversary of Mandela's arrest, August 1962. I think I would have forgotten about that except that when the Schlebusch Commission report on NUSAS was published a couple of years later, which resulted in NUSAS being declared an affected organisation, there's a verbatim account of all the interrogation between the police and NUSAS. Included in it was a diary, which Paul Pretorius had kept

on his visit, which included the discussion we had had in this restaurant in Camden Town, when they had come to talk about this NM campaign. My recollection of reading the report was they kept on being quizzed about what this NM campaign was, and Pretorius kept on saying 'Oh we can't remember what it was about'. Whoever was interrogating them didn't appreciate what the initials stood for, which I think showed both sometimes the stupidity of the regime and also the fact that by that stage those initials didn't mean anything. About that time (the ANC website has a list of all the awards Mandela has been given) the first one after Rivonia was a physicist, John Baruch, from Leeds or Bradford University, who named a particle he'd discovered after Mandela. The only difficulty with that was that they subsequently discovered it wasn't a particle, they made mistakes in the readings, so there was not even in fact a nuclear particle named after him, which was seen at the time as a great breakthrough in terms of putting his name back on the agenda.

To be a bit more serious, the first attempt to try and put the position of the long-term prisoners back on the agenda was in 1973, when Ethel de Keyser at AA and Hugh Lewin at IDAF organised a conference which I think was actually called 'South Africa the Imprisoned Society', which was addressed by Ruth First and by Albert Dhlomo, who'd recently come out of Robben Island. It was an attempt by those involved to begin a sustained campaign about the fact that we mustn't forget about the prisoners. The annual report of the Movement around that time talked about 'for those serving their sentences, many of them such as Nelson Mandela, have now been in prison for more than ten years. There's been little sustained campaigning'. In fact if you look at the annual reports of that time I think a lot of people were being very self-critical because a lot of things were tried, but the atmosphere to get things taken up, this was people raising conditions about prison, there were a whole lot of initiatives people took, but there was no resonance, no response.

I was working with Alan just after leaving the NUS as a sort of deputy at IDAF's research department and one of the publications then was edited by Mary Benson, *The Sun Will Rise*, which was an attempt to produce short biographies of major political prisoners which was part of the process of beginning to raise awareness. The following year there was a really successful rally which I was involved in organising, where Angela Davis, who had just been released from prison in the States, came over at the ANC's invitation, and there was a huge rally. One felt then there was the beginnings of a campaign, a potential of putting the long-term prisoners back on the agenda, including obviously Mandela. I started working full-time for Anti-Apartheid in 1975. Within a few months that all sort of went out the window, in the sense that there was a whole mounting repression within South Africa, and always the difficulty in Anti-Apartheid was to deal with containing pressures.

Apart from the fact that this was the period of South Africa's invasion of Angola, Zimbabwe was at a very critical stage in terms of negotiations, and Namibia; even in our work on South Africa, you had the beginnings of whole a series of deaths in detention, which culminated in Biko's death. People forget that at one stage people were being killed in detention almost weekly. I remember someone phoning early in the morning to

say Steve Biko had been killed, and phoning the *Guardian* foreign news desk, and getting the response, 'Well, what's new? You're always phoning us about people dying in detention, what's news about that?' I said, 'Well, wait and see'.

In fact, if one's looking in terms of a serious and successful initiative over Mandela as Nelson Mandela, it wasn't really until 1978, which was Mandela's 60th birthday. It's interesting to track down how that actually happened; many of you may know Enuga Reddy, who was the Assistant Secretary-General of the UN at the time, and he dropped me a note saying was I aware it was Mandela's birthday, and was there some chance of doing something in Britain to try and publicise Mandela's case. It turned out that that was as a result of a discussion he had had with Mac Maharaj, when they'd been in Ghana the previous year, and Mac had suggested it to him. But then if you read Mandela's autobiography, and Kathy just confirmed this to me beforehand, in fact the idea of marking that occasion with the publication of the autobiography was something that Kathy and Walter Sisulu discussed on Robben Island a couple of years earlier. So although I thought I was taking up some initiative from Reddy in New York, the actual initiative had come from within Robben Island, although I was completely unconscious of that. It was the first time really that we had some success in putting Nelson Mandela as Nelson Mandela back on the agenda.

There was this lovely photograph of Nelson Mandela outside Westminster Abbey; we wanted a campaign which was going to reach beyond the traditional anti-apartheid constituency, and that seemed to be an exceptionally good photograph. Mary [Benson, who took the photograph] agreed to it, and we got these huge birthday cards made. Joan Lestor, who was vice-president of the AAM, took one these to the National Executive of the Labour Party, and of course, this is 1978, so half the executive were members of the Cabinet, passed it round and a number of them signed it. So there was this birthday card with a whole lot of British Cabinet members having signed it, and others, so Joan and Barbara Castle and Bob [Hughes] tried to deliver it to South Africa House on July 18th 1978. They got so panicked by this they actually shut the doors – it was before all the security, you could actually walk in relatively easily. They kept it closed for the rest of the day because they were scared of getting these things delivered.

Joan, who was quite angry about the fact that she couldn't even deliver this birthday card, went back to the House of Commons. It was Prime Minister's Question Time, and she got up and said this had just happened, and Callaghan used the despatch box to send greetings to Mandela. This brought with it some publicity, and that evening we'd arranged for a meeting with Reddy in the Grand Committee Room in the House of Commons, and there were about 300 people there, the place was full to overflowing. John Collins spoke, Mary spoke, the Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid spoke; it was the beginnings of laying a basis for the Mandela campaign. Of course when within South Africa, Percy Khoza and others called for Mandela's release after Zimbabwe's independence, we'd already begun to establish an involvement, an understanding of the importance of the campaign, not just within the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but also in other organisations associated with us. That was really when the campaign began to take shape. From then onwards there was a whole series of different

initiatives. Some of them were taken with some overall strategy in mind to raise the profile of Mandela, a lot of them were simply initiatives by organisations, by individuals who felt that they wanted somehow to participate in the campaign.

Some people may remember Mandela's candidacy for the chancellorship of the University of London; it was some postgraduate students at Birkbeck College who were behind the whole thing. They thought that when the Queen Mother was the chancellor, Princess Anne was the university's candidate, they thought it would all go through without any controversy, but it was actually an elected post and every graduate at the university had a chance to vote. The university wouldn't accept the nomination and there was a whole lot of efforts to find some basis on which they would accept that Mandela would agree to be nominated. Someone, I can't remember whether it was a lawyer, sanctioned it and the University agreed. Although he only got 20 per cent of the votes, I think everyone from our side regarded it as a victory. *The Times* even ran an editorial in which they suggested that he should be given an honorary degree, having got this kind of support from the graduates. He got the honorary degree, but this came not in 1981 when all this happened, but in 1996 when he was on his state visit. The irony was that it was in Buckingham Palace, and not even in Senate House – whether the Princess Royal was present or not I don't know, but she'd won the campaign.

So there was that, there was Glasgow City Council who gave Mandela the freedom of the city, there was a small art gallery in Camden Town which decided to name itself after Mandela. There were a whole lot of very locally based initiatives in which people were wanting to find some way in which to participate in the campaign. After the 1980 campaign there was a real fear that the same thing would happen again; that the campaign would attract publicity and then go off the boil again. To mark what was going to be 20 years of Mandela's imprisonment, August 1982 – and I think another important factor was that Trevor Huddleston had been elected president of Anti-Apartheid after Ambrose Reeves had died, and he was still based in Mauritius at that stage, but he'd come to London for a big conference we had in March 1982, and Alfred Nzo was there too.

I can't remember how, but the idea came of trying to see how the campaign could be put back on the agenda, with the idea of saying, 'Look, in most countries if you'd served 20 years imprisonment for a life sentence you'd have been released, but in South Africa life imprisonment means life'. What was agreed was that the ANC, and eventually Oliver Tambo himself, issued this appeal for an intensified campaign for the release of Mandela on the anniversary, August 5th, which was then to be launched with an international petition and a whole lot of other things on October 11th, which the UN had designated as a day of solidarity with South African political prisoners. This had the advantage that it was a more suitable time to launch a campaign than in August.

I think it was that stage, but it could have been at some other time, that I had a talk with Oliver Tambo in Muswell Hill, where his home was, and somehow the conversation was about what was the purpose of the Mandela campaign – something Kathy talked about – why 'Free Nelson Mandela'? For most people, Mandela was the symbol of the other



political prisoners, so when you called for the release of Mandela you were calling for the release of the others too. Because there were alternative forces, there was Buthelezi, there was black consciousness, there was the PAC, so it was the motivation of some people in the ANC externally, and also within Anti-Apartheid and other groups that were close to the ANC, by focusing on Mandela, you were putting the ANC centre stage. There was a view which I think I must have shown some sympathy, for reasons I'll come to in a moment, amongst some of us, that the regime was clearly looking for some kind of reform package. This was the time before the tricameral parliament, but it was moving towards some way in which it was going to try and incorporate sections of the black community in a more organised fashion into the apartheid system, to give more of a semblance of a non-racial South Africa in order to try and diffuse international pressure. One way of trying to forestall that was to focus on the political prisoners, because if one focused on the political prisoners, and said, 'Look, the ANC leadership is in prison, the leaders of the South African struggle are in prison, you can't have any settlement that's going to be credible without their involvement', this would be a way of making the reforms look as hollow as they were. I remember Oliver effectively ticked me off, very quietly, and he simply said, 'If we're going to campaign for Mandela's release, it's to get Nelson released'. His overwhelming concern was not that we used this campaign for some other agenda, but that we must make sure that the purpose of the campaign was to get Nelson and the others that were imprisoned at the time of Rivonia freed. It was a long time before that happened, and there were times at which we were able to prioritise Mandela, and other times the campaign went off the boil because there was more focus on sanctions and other issues.

Tony is here from Tribute, the people who managed the two Mandela concerts, but it was the 1988 campaign, Alan was involved in that in terms of the march from Glasgow to London and all the other activities, that's what really transformed the situation. We took a poll at the time and 92 per cent of people knew who Mandela was, whereas at that time less than half the population knew who their MP was. There was a higher acknowledgement that Nelson Mandela was a political prisoner in South Africa than Sid – remember Sid, who was from this gas campaign? It was the privatisation of gas, they spent millions of pounds on this publicity campaign, and yet less people knew who Sid was. I don't want to pick an argument with Anthony, but I don't think the only barometer is the number of inches of column space in *The Times*. I think all our experience in Anti-Apartheid was that it was extremely hard to get national press coverage, and we had to find alternative ways, and the strength of the Mandela campaign was that it involved ordinary people, from all walks of life, who found some way of being involved.

On the sanctions campaign, we got to a situation where the majority of people were pro-sanctions before a single national paper, apart from the left press, black press, religious press, had an editorial policy supporting sanctions. So in the editorials of the *Guardian*, the *FT* [*Financial Times*], who moved later to that position, there was no sympathy, and yet we could get majority support. What happened with the Mandela campaign, you know there was Jerry Dammers 'Free Nelson Mandela' record, later on Jim Kerr and others, all those activities caught the imagination of people, and I think they're a better barometer for what the campaign was achieving than simply what appeared in the national press.

*Alan Brooks:* You'll be delighted to hear that I'm scrapping at least half of what I had prepared in the light of the way proceedings have been conducted so far. I had provisionally entitled my talk 'A Post-modern Illustrated History of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in seven and a half chapters'. I start with the illustrations; some of you may never have seen this, so I'm going to pass it around. I rejected as too naff even for me the idea of wearing the T-shirt that I wore on the march from Glasgow to London 11 years ago – 'Nelson Mandela, Freedom at 70'. Now look at the slogans on the back, very interesting, this: 'Free Namibia, Free South Africa, Sanctions Now' – we were trying to put all our eggs in one basket, the Nelson Mandela basket, we managed it in some way.

Who am I? You may well ask, so I'll answer the question. I was born in Bristol in 1940. My parents emigrated to Southern Rhodesia after the war because my father was deeply opposed to the introduction of the National Health Service as a GP, and couldn't stand another winter like that in 1947. So I had my schooling in Rhodesia and I went to University in South Africa and studied Law. I fell foul of the authorities there in circumstances I won't dwell on, spent two years in prison, was deported from South Africa as an alien, and returned to London in 1966. I had two spells of full-time employment in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, first of all as its Organising Secretary from 1967 to 1970, and later as its Deputy Executive Secretary from January 1987 to December 1991. I had much longer spells as a member of the editorial board of Anti-Apartheid News and of the Executive Committee. I was also, for 18 years from 1962 to 1980, a member of the South African Communist Party and a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain from 1980 to 1990.

I suppose the only reason why anybody thought it useful to ask me along here was that I was heavily involved in the Movement in the late 1960s and to some extent I could provide a bridge between your first seminar and this one. However I can't if I'm to confine myself to Nelson Mandela; I cannot remember a single thing we did about Nelson Mandela in the period where I worked for the Movement in 1967 to 70. That was the period when the repeated attempts of Wilson and Alec Douglas-Home to strike a deal with Ian Smith in Rhodesia post-UDI was priority work for us, there was the sports campaign and so on.

Let us put Nelson Mandela aside for a moment, because I would like to give you some impressions of the Anti-Apartheid Movement as an organisation in the late '60s. I have to say that given that I've got 20-25 years left on this mortal coil, I don't really expect to see, before I shuffle off it, a history of the Anti-Apartheid Movement that satisfies me. It's going to be an extraordinarily difficult exercise to do. We were a very complex organisation, interfaced with so many different currents and facets of British society, and with Southern African events and trends, that to catch all that up, and do it justice is going to be exceptionally difficult. As organising secretary, 1967 to 1970, I had three, so to speak, portfolios: I was responsible for youth and student activity, local groups and trade unions. By the time I returned to the Movement in 1987, that was more than one person's job, each of those. By then we had a whole very important dimension of work in local government which hardly featured very prominently back in the late '60s. I want to

mention something which won't appear in any history, but I'm going to call it the Blaustein phenomenon. The context: late '69–early '70, there's a South African rugby team touring Britain. In the context already of a campaign to oppose a MCC cricket tour of South Africa the next summer, or the South Africans coming here, but the terrain of the campaign was actually the presence of the South African rugby team, playing two matches a week, in all the main cities. Loads and loads of students got involved; that gave rise to some huge demonstrations, Leicester, Manchester, Cardiff, Swansea, Edinburgh and so on. In the late '60s – Paris and all that – students had to be present in big numbers at such demonstrations and preferably get their heads banged in a bit in order to prove that you were really radical. Those were tremendous events, and many young people got hooked on the anti-apartheid issue then. They may have drifted out of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but the seeds of a commitment to the sort of policies we were putting forward were laid down then. I've been very interested in the coverage of the debate about General Pinochet, by the observation, which I think there's a lot of truth in, that his fate is going to be decided by the movers and shakers who were formed ideologically and politically in this sense, by the events around what happened in Chile in the '70s. I think you can only understand the impact of the Anti-Apartheid Movement historically speaking if you look at people who were drawn into it or influenced by it in the late 1960s to early 1970s. Let me give you an example: I want to drop quite a lot of names today, and I'm still coming to Douglas Blaustein. The name I want to drop now – maybe he's known to some of you, Alan Hayling, who I think is Director of Programmes for Channel 4. He got a bit of adverse publicity recently, when some of their programmes turned out to be concocted. If Alan Hayling walked in the door now I wouldn't recognise him, because I haven't had any dealings with him for a very long time. But I remember he was one of the brightest spirits in an organisation called Cambridge University UNSA – the United Nations Student Organisation, a very active student grouping in the late '60s, and he was the leading light there. They did a lot of work on South Africa. So a long time afterwards, he is in an absolutely key position in the media, but I strongly suspect that what he thinks about South Africa started to be shaped by the Movement in that period. And you'd have to go through a whole swathe of movers and shakers of the chattering classes, in British society to see those processes at work over that long period of time.

So we had all these huge demonstrations going on in late '69–early '70. I remember the Anti-Apartheid office at 89 Charlotte Street just before Christmas 1969, you felt almost like you were working in a toy factory, a mail-order toy factory at Christmas time, the busiest time of the year. We seemed to do nothing else but wrap up parcels and send them out. There were these two major demonstrations a week, different places in the country as the South African rugby team moved around, and the demand for our campaigning materials was huge, 2,000 leaflets here, 10,000 leaflets there, so many posters here, badges and so on, and we were just pumping out the stuff, around the place. One of our most committed volunteers was a young lad called Douglas Blaustein, who was actually at Clifton College at Bristol. He came up to London every holiday and worked tremendously hard. The odd thing to the rest of us was he was a committed Tory. He was a passionate supporter of the Conservative Party, but a committed supporter of the Anti-Apartheid Movement because he was anti-racist. I hope that any future historian of the movement deals properly with our capacity to tap into the current of British society,

admittedly not a very strong one, but of Conservatism that is anti-racist. Later on he became a councillor in Brent or Barnet, never did much more in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but for me he serves that symbolic function of our capacity to work in that way. There's actually a whole area of discussion, which I'm very keen to open up. I'm just going to launch it quickly and maybe we can get our teeth into it this afternoon. I really want to stimulate an open debate about reds under the bed. Was the Anti-Apartheid Movement run by Communists, to what extent was it, what was the relationship between the Anti-Apartheid Movement and at least two Communist Parties involved, both of which I belonged to at different times. I hope we can come back to that. Let me jump on to the 1988 campaign. I planned to do very little about this and I think I will anyway, as I think Paul Brannen and Clive Nelson will be speaking later.

I blame Maggie Thatcher for the fact that I'm still a smoker. Because as we were building up to that wonderful concert in June 1988, I'd given up smoking for 14 months. I was doing very well – and we hit the most bizarre crisis. I don't know what will appear of it in the records, but we were at the stage where the tickets had all been sold for the concert, everything was on stream, but no contracts had been signed with the BBC. A campaign against the concerts started to build up and it looked as though Downing Street was engineering it. An editorial here, an article there, what on earth was the BBC doing, thinking of promoting this highly political event to celebrate Mandela's birthday. It began to appear as if the BBC might pull out, and if the BBC had pulled out that was an end to satellite coverage, to international coverage. One band and then another, most of them probably, would have pulled out, and we'd be left with a half-empty Wembley stadium and a bill of bills that high, and we staring bankruptcy and the end of the Anti-Apartheid Movement if that concert was cancelled. It was terrible. One really felt walking on glass, working in the office in those days. And then, not for the first time in our history, we were rescued by the South African regime. Pik Botha blundered into the arena with a strong attack on the BBC for doing this concert, and from the moment that happened we knew we were safe, because there was no way that the BBC could back down under the onslaught of the South African regime. Phew! But I'd started smoking again by that stage, and I still am.

We lived very dangerously back then. We took on immense things which we really had no capacity to do. The important difference between that great Mandela concert and the equally well known big pop concerts of the time; Band Aid, Live Aid and so on, was that ours was not a fund-raising event, it was a consciousness raising event. We were trying to make people aware of the issues and propel them into action. So there was nothing running up on the screen, the total is growing, so many million etc. etc., not even the telephone number of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. So how were people whose consciousness was raised by the evening to move forward into action, how could we reach them? We then attempted for the first time in our lives, because we'd never had this sort of money, to reach people through advertising. What a botch up. I was in charge and I have to confess it was a complete botch up, we had no experience, no planning. I met for the first time a species of professional I had never even heard of before, I wasn't aware of their existence, called media buyers. The ones you go to who will negotiate with the television or the radio or the newspapers or whoever it is and buy you the space that

you need for your campaign. We found some media buyers, and the money wasn't yet coming in, quite a lot came in eventually by extraordinarily diverse routes and so on, but we'd had to take on loads more staff, and quickly found ourselves in financial difficulties. Whoever writes about the history of the finances of the Anti-Apartheid Movement is going to have the most horrible and difficult job! Here I want to mention another individual who won't appear in any book but who stands for something in my memory of these events. There were four partners in this firm of media buyers, and one of them felt very committed to us. Since we couldn't see the money that we were about to spend, he stepped into the breach and said, 'I will pick up the bill (these people who we don't know, we'd never dealt with them before) if they fail to pay the bills'. He underwrote our expenses. All these unsung contributors to the success of the movement.

One last indulgence if you will allow me: Alan meets Maggie; Maggie meets Alan. Context: some stage of the growing crisis in South Africa, 1985 or '86. I was for a couple of years secretary of the Barnet branch of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Not, I regret to say, one of the more effective or successful branches, but we struggled along over many years. Something blew up and the troops went into the townships in South Africa and we had to respond, a lot of our work was proactive in that sense, we just had to respond to the crises as they emerged in South Africa. We found ourselves, in August, the deadest month in the political calendar in Britain, organising a public meeting in Finchley on this latest crisis in South Africa. And it went remarkably well, we packed the Friends Meeting House, got a bit of press coverage, passed the usual unanimous resolution, and we banged it off to our local MP, Mrs Thatcher, not expecting any response. To our astonishment, about 8 or 10 weeks later we got an invitation from her constituency secretary saying 'Mrs Thatcher is prepared to meet you, to discuss your memorandum' and we were given the time – it was quarter to five on a Saturday afternoon on her constituency visit. Off we trooped, three of us; astonishing, in these times that we live in, there was no attempt to establish our ID, we just walked up to this office in Ballards Lane in Finchley, and said we're from the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and the policeman doffed his hat and showed us in. Nobody checked us out inside, and ten minutes later there we were, in a room alone with Mrs Thatcher, the three of us and her on her side of the table. We thought, quarter to five is the end of her programme for the afternoon, we'll get 15 minutes in which she will talk for 14 and a half, and we'll be out on our ear. It didn't turn out quite like that because at 5.30 her programme secretary rushed in to try and remove her from the debate that had taken place, and she waved her away and so on; we had a good bite of the cherry there. I saw for myself how much she loves an argument – the process of argument engages her. I saw also two pieces of her rhetoric at work, which was so effective. The issue of violence came up of course. We'd actually gone in with a very soft package, just calling on the British government to call for the removal of South African troops from the townships. Very mild, but of course she didn't give an inch, wouldn't budge at all, not even on that. For her it was a security issue, and other governments were entitled to the way they deal with security problems. The question of violence had come up, and she'd worked out to perfection the rhetoric about violence: 'Are you for violence? Can you support violence? I don't support violence, I'm against violence.' Of course, nobody can stand up in public life and say, 'I'm for violence!' You could see that she knew it was a demagogic trick, but she knew how to play it and how to

silence people. Then she tried to steer us, as Conservative opponents so often did, into other arguments about other African countries. She started talking about our special relationship with Uganda, because we were arguing, we always argued this line, that Britain has a special relationship with South Africa. She would say 'Oh, but we have a special relationship with Uganda' and I could see the danger of this so I said 'But we don't have a secret naval Intelligence exchange arrangement with Uganda'. She knew at once what I was talking about, the Simonstown Agreement, South Africa's role in monitoring the waters of the Southern Atlantic and the Indian Ocean for NATO, feeding straight into NATO, and she said, 'That's in the national interest': end of argument. How can one argue about the national interest with the Prime Minister?

The only relevance of all this is: Why on earth did she agree to meet us, we weren't a significant force locally. I have to say, Mrs Thatcher, and I hope biographies of her reflect this, was an extraordinarily assiduous constituency MP. Not a month passed when she didn't spend a good five or six hours in the constituency. I remember once in a later job, I was running the Mozambique Information Office in London before Mozambique had an embassy here and Samora Machel made his first state visit to London, and it ended at a session at Downing Street. The balance of her priorities was faithfully reflected in the *Finchley Times* the following week, that on Saturday Mrs Thatcher spent 45 minutes with President Machel in Downing Street and five hours in Finchley, ensuring her re-election and feeding her base.

*Clive Nelson:* I want to talk about the role of the activists, what I was doing in the Anti-Apartheid office. One of the things I always realised when I was working at Anti-Apartheid, and this is still going on, however much work I did, however much I knew, there was always people like Mike Terry or Alan Brooks around who knew that much more, and a lot of what I was going to say, they've already said. My role in Anti-Apartheid was to try and link the fairly centralised control of the direction of the Movement with our real base out there in the country: student groups, local groups, black groups, religious groups, and try and keep the momentum of the campaigns going.

The Mandela campaign was absolutely central to that because that campaign you could use to reach people for so much of the work we were doing. It was interesting what people were saying earlier about how much this campaign focused on Mandela and was not linked to other things. From my perspective as a full-time paid activist in the movement between 1985 and 1988, we did use the Mandela campaign for that, in a sense, on the ground, tactically, because it was a way of bringing so many more people into understanding the big issues around South Africa. No apology for that, but it's quite interesting what Anthony Sampson was saying about the perspective people had of Mandela. I spent three years, for instance, trying to promote this badge. I used to send it out to loads of people and carry it around. One day I was in Mike and Alan's office and they showed me this picture, and said, 'We're going to have to focus on this', and I thought, 'Oh no, it's a political prisoner I've missed, it's someone I don't know anything about'. Of course it was a smuggled out picture of Nelson Mandela, an updated one, and I'd just spent all this time promoting this badge which had a picture of him in 1960 on it. It

was that sort of thing – you actually had to get down on the ground and get the Mandela campaign and the other campaigns out to our activists.

When I started in the Movement I worked as a volunteer in the office between 1984 and 1985, having worked quite a lot in local groups in Leicester, in Aberdeen and in North London first. One of the major campaigns we were starting then was the giving of awards to Mandela, and in 1984 the city of Aberdeen wanted to give freedom of the city to him; I see they've just given it to Alex Ferguson actually, and they mentioned Mandela as being one of the earlier ones in that report the other week. I think what the volunteer activists were doing was linking that suggestion, which actually came from the Labour Council of Aberdeen to the wider anti-apartheid struggle. The council had noticed that Mandela had become a very very big figure, because the groundwork had been laid in the '60s and '70s – this is now early '80s. Many people tried to name streets, name squares, give awards, and the activists job was to try and link those to the wider issues involved, and not to allow it to get detached; not that they tried to do that, but the activists work was to try and make sure these people were on board.

And then when I came down to London, that sort of campaign was taking off in a huge way. The renaming of things, and of course Jarry Damners' record, because on the back of that it had a little piece about Mandela and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. My first job in the office, Mike Terry said, 'We've had a few requests on the back of this record, would you go and sort them out'. I went in and there was this room full of letters, mostly from people, mostly youngsters, mostly students and schoolchildren, saying, 'Dear Anti-Apartheid, I saw it on the back of the record, will you please send me some information'. This was a little bit after the record had been published. So then we put together a lot of material about Mandela and spent a lot of time sending it out. And in that material was not only the badge and poster and information about Mandela but also the sanctions campaign, which was becoming so important then. That was one section of active work.

The second thing was going out to different groups, speaking to different groups, sending speakers out from the Anti-Apartheid Movement to promote the different campaigns, again using material we had. All those meetings, and I did an awful lot of them myself, and organised quite a few people to do them, the issue of Mandela was by that time – 1984 to 1986 – was absolutely essential to those meetings, especially the ones which were further out, not so actively involved in the London area. By the end of the '80s we started to do the campaigns that Alan referred to: the build up to Mandela's birthday it was very exhilarating, very exciting to be an activist at that time. There was so much going on, and the scale of what we were doing really took us as activists by surprise; how many people could be generated out onto the street into events at that time. We were able to, in my view, bring people onto a different level, and that really surprised us – how big that campaign actually became, the march, lots of events in London itself, and hundreds of events around the country were taking place around that time to mark Mandela's 70th birthday.

From an activist's point of view that's what I really wanted to come and say. The Mandela campaign was not the most important campaign, but it was the campaign you could put

centrally to link so many other things to. Part of my work was to directly service the committee that had been established about political prisoners – SATIS (Southern Africa the Imprisoned Society), which had been formed in the early '70s. That campaign, because of the interest that had been generated about political prisoners, was able to do quite a lot of work on executions and detentions quite independently of the Mandela campaign. I think that through the work that had been done in the '60s and '70s, building up the names of prisoners in the level of consciousness, and the direction that had been established by the Anti-Apartheid Movements, in conjunction with the liberation movement, meant that activists had a lot they could hang on.

You had a lot of committed activists throughout the country, which meant when you were putting on events or demonstrations and new campaigns, you had very committed people out there who knew what was going on. It made the job of full-time activists like me, working in the office, that much easier. You could go to places all over the country and there were people there who were aware and committed, and you could build up a national network of people who would literally on the ground co-ordinate the coaches and the petitions and the postcards and the signings that kept the issue up in people's minds. When dates came up like Mandela's birthday, you suddenly saw this surge of organised support throughout the country. So the job of the activists in the office was to both try and generate that support, but also to run with it, to service it, because there was a lot of support for anti-apartheid activity, and the Movement and people like myself were trying to service it.

Just one other thing: I was always quite amazed in the Movement that the people you had heard of, had written all the books, and were actually suffering the repression, when you got to work in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, those people were there, they were involved as well, and you would go on meetings and marches and Oliver Tambo would be there. I think that was very inspiring for activists who worked in the Movement. Today it's happened again – we've got people who had been political prisoners here. I do think that combination of events in the AAM meant it was a very organised, unified, group. It was great to work there.

*Tony Hollingsworth:* I was up until 2am last night working on another international television campaign that we're hoping to launch, not about Mandela, not about anti-apartheid, thank goodness, but about children's rights and needs in the developing world, so I'm afraid the speech I was going to write isn't written and I've been making up notes as I've gone through. Mine is rather like a counterpoint to lot of things that people have been saying. I was the producer of the 1988 Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute, and that title came out of a tortuous process. I'm going through another tortuous process at the moment, it's identical, as there's a whole set of beneficiaries and politicians and other things. It's the same sort of process as we went through in 1987 when we set about doing that event. You mustn't call it a concert because you demean the whole thing, the whole activity. I don't think people in the Movement, and certainly not people outside the Movement, have got into the vocabulary what in fact was achieved by everybody in those events.



In 1988, 67 countries, on main broadcasters, watched an event around the anti-apartheid issue, for 11 and a half hours. Amongst those countries were some very large ones – the USSR was a body at that point, India was broadcasting as a body at that point. That broadcast, still to this day, holds the ratings record for any, in television terms, entertainment event. The ratings for that show are only superseded, nowadays, by the collective mass of the Olympics, on their opening ceremony. My question is, how on earth did that happen?

I still do this, I've now done nine of these international television events for different reasons, but it's still difficult for me to exactly understand all the things that came together to allow that first event to happen. My background before that happened was that I had thought I was going to be an academic for many many years, and then my cousin, who runs a farm in Somerset, phoned me up one day and said, 'These fools who have been running a festival on my site (this is the Glastonbury festival) and go bankrupt each year, I'm not letting them do it any more; we're doing it.' I said, 'Oh well done, what are you going to do?' and he said 'No, we're doing it'. 'No, no, no,' I said, 'I'm doing a masters degree in economics, you're a dairy farmer and you're hopeless, you've only got 30 cows, this is a ridiculous situation, you can't possibly put on this event', and he said, 'Well, I know about herding, and that's what a festival is about, and you know about money, that's what economics is about, we can do a festival.' It went on for ages, this phone call.

Anyway, this festival has now grown, we learnt a lot from doing it, I was with him doing it for about six years, and we learnt a lot. That's a live event, you can call it a festival, you can call it a concert, but it takes into its gambit only 100,000 people each time it happens. It still happens, it no longer gives its money to Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, because that changed, but it gives some profits each year to something else. I came out of that tradition of learning that what festivals and those sort of things were about was toilets and first aid, and all that sort of stuff which is real, and then you put the entertainment on the top of it. I also learnt a very very simple lesson in doing that: this was that the title of that event was Glastonbury CND festival. There was no policy prescription in the title, none at all. In fact, even though we didn't realise what we were doing, the clarity there was that it was a very simple thing for the audience to absorb. It was as simple as all the other messages that they're being bombarded with every day, about OMO, about Vauxhall Cars, about Sony or whatever, they're very simple communicative messages all the way through.

I then went on and did a lot of work for the GLC, put a lot of events on and festivals, and I realised that the most successful things we did were when we got that title down to something that was very very simple for people to manage and get into their heads. In 1987, the last year I did Glastonbury, Jerry Dammers phoned me up right in the middle of the festival; 100,000 people all around you, you're on walkie-talkies and all that sort of stuff, and Jerry Dammers is on the phone. It came out of a conversation that we'd had months and months beforehand, I think in fact in 1985, at the end of the GLC, when Jerry had said, 'Will you do me a big event?', and I'd said, 'Yes, but you get me one big star interested, I don't care whether they're interested in giving you a pair of socks or a guitar

or whatever, get me one big star and we can roll it all out from there.' He then phoned me in '87 in the middle of this festival and said 'Tony, Jim Kerr from Simple Minds has phoned me and says he wants to help'. I said, 'That's wonderful Jerry, I'll see you in London next week'. 'No, no, we have to talk about it.' 'Well, what does he want to help do?' 'Well, he wants to help do the event I was going to stage one month ago which didn't happen.' 'Alright', I said, 'That sounds the usual sort of stuff, I'll talk to you when I come back to London'.

We did, we went to see Simple Minds and we started putting together what we thought, what we hoped, was going to be a large campaign tool. Then we started sitting down with the Anti Apartheid Movement and we were torn in a very strange political process between this peculiar thing called 'Artists Against Apartheid', which was a political movement that waxed and waned and wouldn't stand still and wasn't really there sometimes and was at other times. The other movement, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which was much more solid, was also waxing and waning of course, but coming from a longer history and a longer set of relationships.

I can remember – there was a long debate, if I remember rightly, and I'm not going to, but it was something like that this should be an event for all political prisoners in South Africa and surrounding states. I was going, 'No, no, no, I can't do that, I've got to have – I can't compete with OMO ads with that, you know, I can't compete with the other messages that people are being bombarded with every day, all the time. I have to get this dealt with, I want Nelson Mandela's name to be in it.' Clearly, it had been around enough for many many people to understand what it would symbolise. We came up then with the words 'Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute', which I think evolved over a period of time. The company I at that point ran was a company called Elephant House Productions, which was credited in the brochure you've got. The company I now run is called 'Tribute', and it's called Tribute because that is a magic word, I learnt that it's a magic word – 70th Birthday Tribute. If I was going around the broadcasters, which I started doing, phoning around the broadcasters, phoning artists about doing something for Nelson Mandela – that was terrible. 'He is a black terrorist leader' – you would hear it on the radio and television news, and the same controllers of the channels as the people that I was talking to were the people that controlled those news broadcasts. The artists themselves, practically all the artists that appeared on that show, I have letters on file that say, 'No I can't do it'. One of the reasons was that he was still to many people a black terrorist leader, even if they might support, they had that other side all the time. They were waxing and waning between 'Was he a good guy or was he a black terrorist leader?' It wasn't resolved in that year 1987 at all for most of the people that eventually got involved in that event. But with the 70th Birthday Tribute, we could claim that this was a musical tribute, and we structured it in that way right from the start when talking to broadcasters. At that moment you were talking about, Alan, when Thatcher started – when there were questions in the House being asked about whether this could or couldn't happen, the fact that it was called the 'Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute' and that we had already proclaimed to the BBC and everyone else that we did not meet the ANC, we did not talk to the ANC, we had no relationship with the ANC, which was quite truthful as we had a relationship with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, not the ANC, which we declared, that

allowed that to go through. What also allowed it to go through was that by the time those questions were being asked in the House, we had about 50 other broadcasters around the world all as powerful as the BBC about to take the signal. They couldn't move, they couldn't wriggle out of it. The other part of it that made it absolutely necessary that they did it, and this was the part that got them to buy into it, which was the most difficult thing, getting the first broadcaster in the world to buy into this (eventually we had 67). The way it came was a fantastic series of events, which had nothing to do with us at all, but the BBC was running a quiet campaign of autonomy against the government. Its political autonomy was focusing a lot on what access to footage from Northern Ireland the British government could have. Because of that there many people high up in the BBC who were going, 'We are *absolutely* autonomous'. They were taking that sort of stand, and hence they were resisting any sort of pressures from government. The present complexion of the BBC is the opposite; they're in, they're playing ball, it's that sort of situation.

The critical move that allowed it to happen after we got about four or five artists into the pot was getting ourselves onto the BBC to then let it flow. It happened in a strange way: John Gau, who's an eminent broadcaster in this country, chairman of the Royal Television Society, used to be head of news for the BBC, was not offered the position of Controller of BBC1 when he expected to be. He was offered the Position of Controller 2, which he refused, he felt it was a snub. The man that took the position of Controller 2 was Alan Yentob, who came from a music and arts background, and he's now director of all programming at the BBC. Alan Yentob knew exactly what we were talking about in terms of the content of all the material, so we were talking to someone that understood it, but we took John Gau with us to that meeting, and John Gau as his superior, and having turned down his job, said, 'I know these people, I know what they're going to do, I know the intent of this event'. And he used the words in that first meeting: 'Alan, it's time to bite the bullet'. Which actually wasn't a reference to Ireland at all but just one of those things where a very senior person was saying to a new person in that role, 'Bite the bullet', and he did. We came out of that with six hours of broadcasting which we allowed to grow, if we could get the event to sustain it. That was very very critical.

It was an international television event, it wasn't a concert. It never took steam as a concert, a live event, it was always directed as trying to be for television, for radio, for that mass media, and when we went on air, we were going on air to what we now know was about 500 million people. At the beginning of the Grammys and the Oscars and all those sort of things they go on air and they say, 'We're broadcasting to a billion people'. You can't broadcast to a billion people, you just can't technically do it, there aren't that many people who will watch particular channels. But we were broadcasting to about 500 million people, and we were broadcasting under a very very simple banner, which was 'Nelson Mandela's 70th Birthday Tribute', which of course was wrong because it wasn't his birthday, but nobody seemed to mind about that. We couldn't get the stadium on his birthday.

What I think was happening that was very interesting was that relationship that the BBC found themselves in vis a vis the state, over here, I think another thing that then took the

thing off in a major way was the position of a new broadcaster in America called Fox, Murdoch's channel, which had just been launched in America. We couldn't get this show broadcast on the other three networks, ABC, NBC and CBS, but Fox were brand new and they needed some sort of flagship event to go out with, in some way. At the end we had problems with the way they edited the broadcast, but their intent at the beginning they wanted to come in and embrace this whole project. That was the event they gave us, they wanted a flagship piece of broadcasting to put them on and keep them on the map in that first year. Immediately we had that, to the American artists and the American entertainment industry, and I've sat in it now for about 20 years, even though it may not be 70 per cent of the market it behaves as though it is 70 per cent of the market and everyone is slightly beholden to that. Immediately we got in the position that we were on American television and also on a supposed network, at that point, the pitch to artists was a very different pitch. If you look at the way that show came together, musicians came in first, and as soon as we got into that position with Fox, a whole load of film stars came in as well. That really was what allowed that bit to run.

I'm not saying any of that as if it didn't require 50 years of campaigning underneath it. It was right on the back of that, it couldn't possibly have happened if all those things hadn't come into place. One of the points that I think is very important though, is that because the banner was so simple, because we weren't saying in the booking of that show, and in the show itself, we weren't saying 'Sanctions Now'. We didn't have any policy prescription, it was an 11 and a half hour show with no policy in it, it just had a banner, 'Nelson Mandela's 70th Birthday Tribute'. It didn't even say 'Free Mandela', it didn't say any of those things on its banner. Because of that it could house within it a whole set of artists who held completely contrary points of view. The band that actually gave an unequivocal commitment first off was Dire Straits. Simple Minds gave a contingent first off, Dire Straits just said, 'We're in, we don't care who else is in', wonderful sort of commitment. They did it on condition that they didn't have to deal at all with Artists Against Apartheid, that's the truth of the matter, because they didn't agree with their politics. That was a band that had also given all their royalties over from record sales in South Africa, but they'd given them over to Amnesty International, who weren't actually operating in South Africa at the time, so they'd given it over wrongly, but their intent was right. Sting, for instance, I had quite a long debate with him, and we were in Switzerland at the time, and I can hear him saying it now: 'If Nelson Mandela were to come out, there would be a bloodbath'. You know, that sort of opinion about things. We had, in that event, a whole collection of artists who had completely different views of what you should do, what you shouldn't do, should you support sanctions, should the UN boycott stand or not, all of those issues, and by actually not getting into the policy prescription, we were allowed to put them all together and have this enormous force. Really all they were doing at that point was saying, 'I'll stand behind him'. Some of them did it by standing on the stage and shouting 'Free Mandela!', some of them did it very quietly by saying 'This is for the man in question' and then playing the song. There were lots of different ways of doing it, but I think what was very important about it, to make it acceptable to the artists, to make it acceptable to the broadcasters, was that it didn't have a massive policy prescription in the middle of it. It felt like a musical tribute until it happened, and then once it happened it obviously wasn't, of course it wasn't. But legally up until that point,

until it went out on air, we could pretend that this was a musical tribute to Nelson Mandela. And so the BBC and all those questions, and questions were asked in many other countries as well, in answering them could say, 'All we are doing in fact is covering a musical tribute that is existing in our country. We cover the sports, we cover demonstrations, we cover everything else, and we're covering a musical tribute.'

The other thing I think was important at that point in time was what was happening in the music industry itself. There's been a tradition for thousands of years about protests being in songs, and in the mid and late '60s there were a lot of protest songs, cause songs, around. And then with the Live Aid activity that took place in 1985 you suddenly had this understanding that you could have music and musicians going on to international television and that they could be involved in political events, not just by writing, which was the previous way of doing it, but by doing what they normally do. They go up there, and they sing love songs or hate songs or whatever it is, but they're there, and they're just performing what they normally perform and it is the event that is on television that is the political action, rather than what there was before in the '60s, and before all of that, where it was really the writing of the song that was the political action. It was the writing of the song here with Jerry, it hasn't stopped, but there came this different political action that you could take.

The other part of all that was that the stars by then, the music and film stars by the late '80s, had started recognising that they had to manage their PR. By the time you got into the late '80s, if you are a large act you suddenly have a PR person and a manager. You're starting to manage your image, and it doesn't matter whether you're Clint Eastwood or Sting or Elton John or any of these sort of people, or Paul McCartney, you're managing your image. And suddenly we had a whole series of activities in the '80s at which they could see that having and supporting a cause was a part of their image. I don't want to draw a judgement on whether they use these events or they don't use these events, but there are certainly two sides of the calculation. One part of the calculation is that these artists may support the cause, and the other part is that these artists may see that by supporting the cause they're actually working towards their own aims and objectives. By the time we got to the late '80s, that was a very easy part of the speech to articulate. For me to be on the phone to a manager and say, 'I'm going to give you international television coverage that will position you artists as a good person' was something that worked. It was part of the pitch, and it was part of the pitch because that was in their ready vocabulary of the way that they ran this artist's life and career as well. That's not to be too sceptical about it, that was just part of it. I think it was those sort of movements that were going around the state in which television was at that time, in particular in two places, in Britain where we were, which gave us the first broadcast, and America, which influenced the entertainment industry very much. This context that they were then into the idea that they managed their PR, and they looked for causes that they would and wouldn't support and they knew that they were managing all of that, that was the environment in which we were working. It wasn't a very innocent environment, it was a very calculating environment, and I think the reason that there were so many artists that I got 'No's' from on our books that then became 'Yes's', was because they were

watching the situation very very carefully, watching to see when they were in and when they weren't in.

Just to go back to the first point, on that first show, somehow the combination there of a very very hard fought political campaign on a grassroots level for many years had allowed suddenly that flurry of activity to happen and go on international television around the world. It was a juxtaposition of forces that I still can't see how you manage it. I still can't see how you manage that, I don't think you can manage it and make it happen, it has to come out of that grassroots activity around the place and then suddenly you may be able to achieve that 'hit', if you like.

The second concert that we did was when Nelson Mandela was out of prison, and we'd been asked to put this together. By this time the company was called Tribute, because it was that wonderful word which meant that no broadcaster in the world could ever say this was not broadcastable. Then we did the second broadcast event, at which Nelson Mandela came, and I think also that that isn't recognised for what happened there. We put that broadcast around the world, we sold it to the broadcasters, on the basis that Nelson Mandela would be there, and would make a speech for eight minutes. Nelson Mandela went on stage, we were broadcasting to 61 countries in the world, eight minutes after he had gone on stage we managed to get him to start to speak. For eight minutes, the standing ovation was so enormous, such a tremendous sound, that there was no way he could speak over it. There was no way the crowd were going to let him speak over it, it was such a wonderful reason, I'm sure you can remember it. I was monitoring on the headphones all the time whether television was staying with us, because eight minutes on television of applause is actually, 'What the dickens are they doing out there?! 61 countries! Oh dear!' But they did, and they all put their commentators, because these events like sporting events they have local people that commentate, they're in little glass boxes up at the top, and the commentators ran a commentary over that. Mostly it was 'I don't believe it', 'Ooh', 'Aah', and 'Look, it's happening again', for about eight minutes.

Now I don't think there has been any other movement personified by such a person as Nelson Mandela, that has captured the airwaves of 61 countries for eight minutes of standing ovation, first of all, let alone 45 minutes of speech. I think it must be the largest, in terms of ratings, audience for any politician speaking. I don't know of any other politician who has spoken to 61 countries for 45 minutes. Maybe it happened many many years ago, but I don't think it did. I don't think that's ever really been gone down, that really there's another massive broadcasting record that he set, that the world listened to him for 45 minutes. We tried in the run-up to that event to make sure that it wasn't going to be 45 minutes. Our fear was that he'd gone into prison 27 years ago having made speeches from the back of platforms of lorries to a live audience, and that suddenly the world now is used to speeches going a little bit faster on television, that he'd come out and he'd go onto an international television platform to make a speech to the world that should move along pretty quickly really, and that he'd speak at the pace that he did 27 years ago from the back of a lorry. And sure enough he did! It went that slowly, but it didn't matter because the charisma and the motivation was fine and everyone stayed with it. We tried, for a week after he came out of prison, we had a crew from America,

Danny Schechter's people, trying to get to see him, wherever he went, to try and see if they could talk to him about how he might address these cameras. We knew he could address this audience of 80,000 people, we were worried that it wouldn't be the right format for the cameras. But they never got to see him, he wouldn't let them talk to him. It was just fine, really. I think in a sense, the Movement doesn't quite know really what was achieved in those two events, they were international television broadcasting records. Anthony's gone, but your comment Mike about, 'Don't count column inches', because I know in terms of hits, those two broadcasts will wipe out any column inches that we can think of. The column inches were necessary to get to the television hit, but in terms of the magnitude of the penetration of that message, it's formidable.

I go around the world selling television programmes all the time, and I know that I can go into Estonia, and I can go into Japan, and I can go into Ghana, and I can go into Argentina, and they know, they bought those shows, they put them on air, and they went everywhere. A lot of what we've done since then hasn't gone everywhere, it's only gone to half the number of places, but it went everywhere.

If I can just give one closing comment. You don't get ready reactions about how audiences feel very often, you just know how the broadcaster felt. One of my second cousins is a Methodist minister up in Durham, and I bumped into him three months after we'd done that first show, which he'd watched on television, and he'd gone the next day, because it was on a Saturday, to chapel, he'd said to the audience, which included quite a lot of children as well, congregation, not an audience. He said, 'Can anyone tell me what happened yesterday?', and a little child of about five said, 'Yes, I can, there was a big big show on television'. And he said, 'Oh, yes, what was that all about?' and the 5-year-old said it was calling for a black man who was in prison, and shouldn't be, to be released. And I think that's what the 5-year-old will have taken away from it in Argentina and the 5-year-old in Moscow. They wouldn't have known about sanctions, they wouldn't have known about this that or the other, but just that very basic fact that he was in prison because he was black and that it was wrong. I think that's better than any ratings figure in the end.

So if you look into it at the end, the guts of it all is a very difficult, contradictory mess, but the overall effect was extraordinary, and that was because it was feeding off this massive movement that was there in place. The artists knew who Mandela was by the time I picked the phone up. One agent in America didn't, I can't mention his name because I'd never do business with him again ever, but there was one very very well-educated agent in Los Angeles, and they're very cool in Los Angeles, you can phone them up and he's on the phone, he wasn't really listening to me. I was pitching to him for an artist for that show, you could hear him playing around with his telephone or his executive toy, and he said 'Tony, whereabouts in Europe is South Africa?'

### ***Discussion***

*William Beinart:* Was there a tension between depoliticising in order to get the name across, and as you suggested, politicising in order to hang other issues on Nelson Mandela?

*Mike Terry:* Apart from Mandela's speech going on for too long, people who watched the concert will remember that he was introduced by Trevor Huddleston, and when Tony and I had seen Alan Yentob right at the beginning, we'd reached an agreement that the BBC would *not* censor anything that Mandela had to say. It was part of the deal and Yentob agreed. We'd not discussed anything that Huddleston would say, and it wasn't even thought about how he would be introduced. When there was a draft copy written of Mandela's speech, it was very general, and what we were concerned about was that the message also came out about the kind of things that people in Britain and internationally could do to support Mandela and the ANC after his release. So things that we wanted to emphasise, we thought we could put into Trevor's speech.

So there was a discussion with Trevor, he drafted up some notes, other people added things in and there was this text. This was his introduction, which included the fact that the ANC needed funds to continue its work. This was all agreed so we had copied it up and given it out to people, one of whom passed it on to Alan Yentob. He looked at this thing, and suddenly saw, here was the BBC, broadcasting to 61 countries an appeal for funds for the ANC and he was a bit nervous. He came to see me, and he said, 'What's this? Look, we're only concerned about Britain, and broadcasting whatever fits into the BBC's constitution, we can't do this.' His choice was either we just talk over Huddleston at that stage as far as the BBC is concerned or alternatively change the text. The trouble with changing the text was ... Mendi [Msimang, ANC representative] spoke through our respective principles: I spoke to Trevor, Mendi spoke to Mandela, both of whom independently said, 'Just leave that sentence out'. So of the whole of the actual text, Trevor just scrawled out these two or three lines, and we thought we'd take the flak afterwards, because that was better than the BBC talking over what Trevor was saying. On the day, Trevor's up on the stage, he's got his text – both of them refused to use autocues, which is the other thing that Tony didn't mention, we'd spent ages trying to persuade them to practice using ...

*Tony Hollingsworth:* The reason for that is you can control the speed of the text you see, so you can get them going faster ...

*Mike Terry:* What then happens is that Trevor is on stage, reads the first page, the second page, the third page, which is the page with this problematic bit of text, he just turns over by mistake both pages, so he's onto the fourth page, and misses out the whole of this page. Which was fortunate because it had taken much longer, to a lesser extent than Nelson, but he'd had to wait several minutes before he got to speak. So immediately after this speech is over, all these media people, some of them with their own agenda, coming up and saying, 'Is it true that Huddleston was censored by the BBC?' and I said, 'Look at the speech: he just turned over a whole page by mistake'.

*Helen Kimble:* I'm always very glad to hear both Alan and Clive talking about local groups, because I know they were both so deeply involved with the local groups. I can't remember when I first joined AA, but I was closely involved with the Oxford local group, in particular, and also on the National Committee, for several years up to 1994. The



amount of work that went on in those tiny, often bombed offices in Mandela Street is incredible, and I often think of Mike as a sort of benign spider in the centre of this network of activity – the amount of work that was done, and indeed by Gerard, who followed Alan, until quite recently. But the local groups were very important, and in Oxford we had all sorts of things going for us and with us. On the question of, 'Why just Mandela?', I think actually it speaks for itself, and your point about a simple catchphrase or slogan or symbol, and I think for all of us Mandela symbolised all of those on Robben Island.

In fact when we held our demos in Oxford, the posters usually said, 'Free Nelson Mandela and all South African – later we added Namibian – political prisoners', so we were not unconscious of all the others, I would like to assure Kathy about that. And indeed we ran campaigns for Solomon Mahlangu, who was of course executed, but this raised his profile, and this of course was a help because we later supported SOMAFCO [Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College] in Tanzania. We ran campaigns for the Sharpeville Six, for the Upington 14, people stood in Bonn Square, one for each name. People standing acting the part of the Sharpeville Six, one for each of the names of the six. So we were not unconscious of the problems, but Mandela's symbol and charisma was I think absolutely crucial to the campaign.

We were lucky we got a lot of support on local radio, we were always going into the studios. The City Council was extremely good, the County Council took longer to bring round, but they did both give money to our campaign. I brought along some photos of the ANC flag, we got it flying over the Town Hall, I think at Mandela's release, it may have been before. The council supported us, the mayor, several mayors were very good, the Bishop [of Oxford] of course who was in any case chair of the anti-investment campaign, whose acronym I can't remember at this moment. One MP, Andrew Smith, was terrific. John Patten, MP for North Oxford, was not at all helpful. And the local press – we had a fair amount of coverage, but we had demos in Bonn Square and the covered market, we had petitions, we had stalls. Margaret [Stanton] was the expert on stalls, we picketed the banks on the investment campaign. We got to the point – actually the final fling of the local group was at the elections. This was a campaign which Margaret Stanton, who was our secretary for several years, masterminded. We raised £3,000 for the ANC's election campaign, which in theory was going to buy bicycles in South Africa, which got the students going. Also of course the student movement was terribly important and very helpful in Oxford.

I did want to mention about the forgotten man, and not knowing what he looked like. The day he was released, somebody had got an artist to draw an impression of what they thought he would look like then, with grey hair, or slightly greying, and this went out all around Oxford, on a poster. Actually it wasn't a bad impression, it wasn't too unlike what he actually looked like when he emerged. We had this poster, and we had champagne on the steps of the Town Hall with the MP and great celebrations then.

The other things I'd like to mention briefly: the UN Secretary General was mentioned, but I think the Anti-Apartheid Committee of the United Nations was very important. That went on for many years, Nigeria was always the chair of that, and the professor who was then

chair came to Oxford once and we arranged a meeting with him. That international support was terribly important. Also the presence of Oliver Tambo here. I know there was a feeling about, 'Oliver Tambo had got away and the others were still in prison', but he was a very important figurehead for national meetings in London and so was his wife. We also had a special group of the Namibia Support Committee in Oxford, so we were very active here.

About six weeks after he was released, I was in Namibia for independence celebrations, and I managed to get near him, and very cheekily went up to him and shook his hand, and offered greetings from Oxford Anti-Apartheid. With his charm of course, he absolutely responded incredibly, and held my hand for several minutes while he proceeded to say thank you for all that the British Anti-Apartheid Movement had done in his support, and that that he'd known of what was going on while he was on Robben Island and this was marvellous. The other thing I'd like to say is that I think we were all surprised, it's difficult to remember this now, that it all happened so quickly. We were not aware of the negotiations that had been going on from prison even with Botha but later with de Klerk, so that the thing sprang a surprise, and two or three years before the release, most of us were thinking of maybe the turn of the century, if he's alive that long, so that was something that surprised even the campaigners.

*Margaret Stanton:* I would just like to make one correction to what Helen has said; most of what she said is absolutely right. I was involved with her in Oxford for the last eight years of the campaign up to 1994. I think it's true to say that I was particularly involved with that campaign which raised £3,000 for the ANC election fund. We had absolutely no support from the students or the university, except for a few dons who donated personally, but we had no students, and my own impression is that student organisations in Oxford had largely fallen away from campaigning. They didn't join our campaign at all. Of course, they're not here for many weeks, are they; by the time they've settled into a new term I suppose they're ready to go. So it was mainly from the townspeople that we raised the money, which was good because it involved the black population of Oxford, the very first time that I've managed to get a substantial amount of support from the African-Caribbean population.

The early days: I was involved in Birmingham for about 23 years, which is where I first met Mike. In those early years it was more of a student campaign, in fact it used to irritate people like me who were a bit older and out in the town that so much of the work seemed to have to centre around students, and had to be adapted to townspeople's activity. This meant we were often out on the streets with placards and petitions and so on, but it was very much a student campaign in those days, but not I think in the last three or four years, when we were campaigning after Mandela's release. On the question of when Mandela came into the campaign as a big name, I think that I was working at the grassroots in the provinces from 1963 or 1964. I only became aware of Mandela's name and the significance of it, in the late '70s, about 15 years after I joined. So I think a great deal of the spirit of those early years also needs recording, but I'm not sure how much today, as you have obviously wanted to centre on the role of Mandela in the campaign. I think it was sometimes a little embarrassing to us, particularly in the early stages when

we were using Mandela's name, to feel that we were perhaps fastening too much on the name, and not sufficiently on the wider issues, so I think, as Helen said, we did try to involve the wider scope.

*Alan Brooks:* I'd just like to drop in a thought about Nelson Mandela as the mythical figure, the almost unknown figure that he became by the time of the 70th birthday tribute. I think a great deal of the impact of that operation and the final successful push, the impetus that it gave us towards his release, lies in the fact precisely that he was unknown, that people saw him as a symbol in which they could invest anything that they wanted to, because they had no reality to test it against. In terms of what he stood for, they either didn't know or didn't care whether he was going to defend the armed struggle, what his views were on sanctions, on democracy, on communism, on anything else, it didn't matter – he stood for freedom, in a huge but vague symbolic sense. All sorts of people, starting from all sorts of positions of relative disinterest or ignorance, could identify with that. That was incredibly helpful to those of us who were pushing very clear ideas of where we wanted to go and what we wanted to come out of it.

One of the things that I think should be raked up by Anti-Apartheid is the role of youth in the whole struggle, both in Britain and South Africa. It was students from South Africa who started the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Ros Ainslie and Abdul Minty, in their little basement in Gower Street. They were the ones who started the whole campaign, which grew from there. Then if you think about the situation in South Africa, it was the student movement in 1976 which broke for the first time the great boulder that was keeping the movement down. Of course in '73 there was the strike in Natal which was a sign that the unions were beginning to organise, but from the time of '64 until '76, there was almost no real political activity. It was young people who started the whole thing off, who drew the world's attention to what was going on in South Africa. I think that someone should make a record of the role that young people have played in this whole thing.

The second comment I wanted to make, I'm rather sorry that Anthony's gone, he mentioned the significance of the withdrawal of investments by American firms and how that played a big part. In his book, soon to be published, he writes about the scurrilous TV film which was made by Brian Walden, in which Walden played down the significance of the ANC and the whole movement generally, and said that it was Afrikaner business men who in the end caused the change in South Africa. I would have liked him to be to comment on that, because it's quite an interesting facet.

*Rusty Bernstein:* Nelson Mandela first came to our house sometime in the 1950s. I was in the kitchen and one of my children ran into the kitchen, and said to me, 'There's a giant in the front room.' Now you fast forward 45 years or so, it's a week before the election in 1994, and Nelson Mandela is holding a press conference. Two of my children are at the press conference, my daughter, who was a UN observer, and my son, who was a photojournalist. After the meeting was over, my daughter went up to Nelson and introduced herself, and he was very warm, and she said, 'Oh, my brother is here too', so Nelson said, 'Bring him up, bring him up'. When Keith came up, Keith was a little boy when Nelson first came to our house, Nelson said to him, 'I remember when I first came

to your house, one of your siblings said I was a giant, and you, who were about that height, came and looked up and down at me and said, 'He's not so big'. I think this extraordinary memory of Nelson Mandela is illustrated by that point. Kobie Coetsee, who was Justice Minister, did a report on Nelson Mandela when he was in jail, and one of the things that he commented on was his extraordinary memory, the ability to memorise people, dates and so on. He would ask people he hadn't met for dozens of years about their families and children, he'd remember the names and so on, and it was a powerful weapon.

*William Beinart:* Could I try and get people to focus a little bit more on the late '70s, because it seems to me that was a transition point, that there had been campaigning for an extensive period, there had been highs and lows and 1970 was probably a high point, with the sports boycott '69-'70. Try and think through the process of how the focus on Mandela was resurrected and became sharper at that time.

*Mike Terry:* Some of the things that Anthony said this morning were relevant: first of all, let's go back a bit. When I worked at the Defence and Aid Research Department, we used to do this survey, published every six months, of developments in South Africa. I remember one six-month period. There was this real problem, that we couldn't find any press cutting which mentioned the ANC. So we were doing this survey of what was happening in South Africa, and yet of all the papers we were getting from South Africa and Britain, there was nothing that mentioned the ANC. Things began to change around 1974 to '75, when there was clearly some sort of reorganisation, reformation of the ANC inside. There was a trial in which Raymond Suttner was sentenced, which Winnie Mandela attended and got coverage simply by her presence there. In fact a photograph of her outside the court was taken and sent to us. After Soweto, there were photographs appearing in the press of slogans, 'Free Mandela', being written in townships. There was a big trial, the Pretoria 12 trial, which was trying to link the ANC with some of the resistance which was taking part, so the ANC's profile was emerging. I think when the history is really written it will be seen that in fact after Mozambique's quasi-independence, there was more ability for people to make contact, there was an ANC internal structure beginning to develop again, which was meaning the ANC was getting more of a profile than previously.

Most of the people who came into exile of that Soweto generation looked for the ANC. As far as Anti-Apartheid was concerned, I think one important thing was Mac Maharaj coming out of prison. He was in Britain for several months in 1977. He'd been asked by Mandela to see Denis Healey, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer. He spoke at a lot of meetings, and he was saying to us very clearly, 'I've left these people behind. What's happening?' Clearly that's what was in his mind when he talked to Reddy as well, but it was a question of how do you then start getting a campaign going. That's where the 60th birthday seemed to be a natural thing around which you could organise. It was the first time as far as I can remember that we produced leaflets and stickers and badges specifically regarding Mandela. It was to prove to have been very important, because it meant that people were back-focusing on Mandela, so that when the Mandela campaign took off in South Africa, we'd already sensitised people to the importance of Mandela, to

the fact that these prisoners were still there. It's not to belittle what was happening previously, but in my recollection that's when things began to move.

Then there's the question I always ask myself, it sounds stupid, but whether if Mandela had a different surname, it would have ... because campaigns are about messages, and if you had a complicated Namibian name or whatever, would it have caught off. The other thing that needs to be said is that IDAF at this time had quite extended its publication side of things, so produced at the time of the 60th birthday for the first time a comprehensive pamphlet with all his speeches and everything, and afterwards there was a film portrait of Mandela produced, then IDAF produced a photo-exhibition as well. You have to bear in mind that the Anti-Apartheid Movement was working on a shoestring, we often didn't have enough money to pay people, so IDAF had that much more resources. They were also ready for whatever reasons to take some risks, because he [Mr Reddy] gave us money for that first campaign, despite the fact that in the UN there was a lot of opposition from the Special Committee [Against Apartheid] for any campaign which was specific to Mandela. The Security Council would always object to anything that specifically mentioned the ANC.

*Margaret Stanton:* In addition to what I said before about Mandela's name not being prominent in our campaign until quite late on, in my first years of membership, at least the 1970s, I think it's perhaps even later than that that I became aware of how closely linked we were to what the ANC was doing. The ANC became more prominent in our reports and discussions. I think that was quite late on, wasn't it? Perhaps behind the scenes, but certainly for us in the campaigning groups we were not aware of our close links until quite late in the '70s.

*Clive Nelson:* Just to reiterate, on the ground then, if you were starting to get organised, the issues about South Africa were prominent. I was a student between '78 and '81, and moved around a couple of colleges, and was going out to a lot of others. South Africa was in the news, post-Soweto, people wanted to do things, and the Anti-Apartheid Movement was becoming organised then in the sense of, if you wanted materials or resources, that's where you went, and they would produce materials on Mandela and the political prisoners. Therefore you had so much more, and I think it paid huge dividends, because when it became *the* issue in the mid-80s, and there were lots of other groups jumping on the bandwagon, then the AAM and the ANC were organised in resource terms for conducting campaigns, which was very important. I do think that late '70s period was quite crucial in that sense, we started to have a structure and a strategy, that was coming out from the centre, but that local groups all over the country could respond to. Again, we made the point about youth, students who were doing it who didn't have any resources of their own but they went out and got them. That was critical organisationally at that stage.

*Christabel Gurney:* I'm sure it's right that that late '70s period was important, but I do think the earlier period was important too, because in those years, in the late '60s, which was when I first got involved, and the early '70s, there were people at the centre of Anti-Apartheid who were South African, who were totally committed to the ANC, and if they

hadn't been there, AA could have gone off in all kinds of directions. I think at that time probably, although I don't know a lot about this, internationally the ANC was very weak, and it was the fact that the Anti-Apartheid Movement, such as it was, certainly with the rugby campaign which Alan mentioned, which was big, actually helped the ANC to have an international platform. I think somebody has written that there were times when it was more important for the ANC to have this presence outside the country than it was to have support within it. So I think it was a very important formative period, and for people like me, who didn't know anything about South Africa, a British person who came into the Movement, as soon as you got there, you knew that the ANC was important, it was armed struggle, it was sanctions, and AA kept that flame alive until the ANC did become re-established inside the country, and things took off in the late '70s.

*Alan Brooks:* When was the date of the Morogoro conference – '69. In a way, it won't be possible to write a sensible history of the Anti-Apartheid Movement until there's a sensible history of the ANC. The truth is that the ANC virtually fell apart, was on the point of falling apart, disintegrating as an organisation at the time of the Morogoro conference, which was a crisis conference. The whole leadership, bar Tambo and J B Marks, resigned before they were kicked out, and those two were asked to assemble a leadership and so on. Behind that lie the dark and empty days of the '60s, the crushing defeats of the early '60s, the virtual lack of activity inside South Africa in the late '60s. the frustrations, all those young people who had volunteered for MK and found themselves stuck in dreadful camps in Zambia, Tanzania and so on, unable to do anything. Some broke away and tried to get back into South Africa on their own. Then the ANC tried to get into South Africa with the alliance with ZAPU and that was the first time, in August 1967, the Anti-Apartheid Movement was actually called upon to support an armed struggle, a guerrilla campaign, and that added a dimension of difficulty to our work, because there were a lot of people who supported the nice ideas of the Freedom Charter, but weren't at all happy about guerrilla activity. All this was going nowhere, so getting the ANC onto the agenda, and Nelson Mandela's part of that, was uphill work all the way.

In my period of work in the office in the late '60s, one of the most important subtexts of our work was trying to establish the ANC internationally. It was always a battle to get, when you assembled a platform for a meeting or a conference, there were the key people that you wanted, somebody significant from the Labour Party, somebody from the Liberal Party, a church figure, a trade unionist. But everybody felt you had to have the authentic voice of oppressed South Africans, now who was it going to be? You tried to get an ANC person on, and those who didn't like the ANC worried about it in the Cold War context, because of its alliance with the South African Communist Party and the hand of Moscow and so on, would say, 'Well, we'd better have a PAC speaker as well'. That was an almost certain recipe for disaster because they'd disagree, and if they disagreed publicly on your platform, half the audience would just walk away thinking 'This movement's got nothing for me, they're just squabbling amongst themselves', and off they went. Some of our most difficult national committee meetings were in the days when both the ANC and the PAC attended regularly. I just caught the tail end of that when I started in '66-'67 going to National Committee meetings. These were the days of the so-

called 'United Front'. The PAC had split away from the ANC in South Africa in 1959, and they agreed to try and cobble together, in London at least, a united front so that although divided at home, they were united abroad. It didn't work, couldn't work. Reg September from the ANC office would write a letter to the *Guardian* supporting sanctions. David Sibeko, the PAC representative, would write in the next day saying, 'That's a load of rubbish, we don't want sanctions, we want to nationalise all these capitalist industries with as much capital as possible when we take power'.

Fortunately, the PAC presence faded rapidly, but Mike has mentioned the difficulty that the UN had with the PAC/ANC issue. Then of course we had the China-Soviet split, and there were two camps in the liberation movements in Southern Africa, and there were two clear camps reflecting the China-Soviet split. We had the line-up, ANC, SWAPO, ZAPU, FRELIMO in the Soviet camp, and in the Chinese camp, PAC, ZANU, SWANU, COREMO in Mozambique, and FRELIMO actually dancing all the time between the Soviet Union and China very successfully. Pre the cold war, and the Sino-Soviet split, and the rivalry in the South African Movement, because those were just the principled two, but you also got the Unity Movement popping up from time to time, and later on black consciousness. I think it was a remarkable achievement of the [Anti-Apartheid] Movement to present a reasonably united front to solidarity with South Africa when any one of those fissiparous issues could have sunk us.

*William Beinart:* Any other comments on the late '70s/early '80s periods?

*Rusty Bernstein:* I just wanted to follow up the points that Alan's just made, and to say that the one thing about the ANC in exile in the outside world, and in Britain in particular, was that despite all the difficulties and retreats which the ANC was forced into in South Africa, it always managed to maintain an organised basis in Britain. The ANC was virtually dead in the water in South Africa, dormant, was only perhaps a current of opinion in people's minds, it was not an active presence in politics, but there was always an ANC presence outside the country. The man chiefly responsible for this, to whom I think not enough tribute goes for that period, was Oliver Tambo, who had this remarkable ability of keeping all the various strands and factions and currents within the ANC in exile in one camp, so the ANC was, uniquely among exiled movements, a movement which didn't divide up into rival factions. So I think it was largely his responsibility.

And another point I wanted to make also on the question of personal responsibilities: in the discussion this morning there was a lot of questions asked about, 'Why Nelson Mandela rather than more political prisoners, why did his name get selected?' Apart from the unique character of the man, I think he uniquely bridged the gap or the division in the ANC, in South African liberation movements, and in politics generally, between the non-violent and the violent camps. He stood with a foot in each camp, he had been a leading figure in the non-violent stage of the struggle, he was a leading in the violent stage of the struggle, and there was not another South African leading figure of any stature at all who could claim that. There were people like Chief Luthuli and Z K Mathews, great men in their own right, great leaders with great reputations, whose career ended really with the start of the violent struggle. Mandela bridged this gap, and he therefore had an appeal,

even for the ANC, and in this country I think for students, because he wasn't either just the revolutionary fighter or just the petitioner who went to Whitehall. He bridged both these things so he appealed to both groups, and those groups whose international hero was Che Guevara naturally drifted towards him, where they wouldn't have drifted towards anybody else that I can think of.

*Alan Brooks:* Christabel pointed out how the presence of a number of South African exiles, around and in the Movement in its earliest years, had got it off in the right direction on these big policy issues and so on. When I was the organising secretary in the late '60s and I went around the local groups, I quickly learnt that the surest formula for a dead or dying local group was a preponderance of South African exiles. Because all they wanted to talk about was South Africa; Hilda [Bernstein] has written eloquently about this, they suffered dreadfully from exilitis. The thing that brought them together and made them feel alive again was just wittering on about South Africa. Most of the British people who wanted to do something about apartheid, that was how they saw it, that was a response to brutal racism and so on, were not interested in South Africa and the niceties of this that and the other. They wanted to work out forms of action and to carry them out. They were often frustrated and turned off by the exiles' inward looking preoccupations.

One of the most important contributions that Mike made to the movement in my view, and it helped to lay the basis for the later campaigns, was the anglicisation of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, so it really took root in British life and politics. The evidence of that came later in improbable areas like the local authority work. When you think of it objectively, what on earth can a local authority, with powers and funds defined strictly by law to deal only with citizens on its patch, what on earth has it to do with South Africa and Nelson Mandela? It took a lot of skill and careful negotiation to bring alive that thing and yet how important it became, and you can only do that if you've got roots in British society, you draw your strength from that, and you can't understand how the Movement took off later until you come to terms with that transition from a movement burdened by exilitis in the '60s to becoming a real force in the '70s.

*William Beinart:* A very interesting point. Would anybody else like to pursue it?

*Hilda Bernstein:* I'm not sure. I just want to come back a bit because I totally agree about the exilitis and that the grassroots and the local groups were mostly British and that was their strength. But if you look at what was happening in the '60s, at the centre there was nearly all South Africans, and they kept the policy going at the centre, it was a very interesting combination. I totally agree about the Movement becoming British in the '80s, that was crucial and I'm sure Mike played a role, but really what happened in the '80s that affected what happened here was that things started moving in South Africa. And it would be voluntarist to think that you could have created a movement here if there hadn't been that mass movement in South Africa which people responded to. There was local authority work at the beginning, there were 22 local councils boycotting in 1960, and it's very interesting because a lot of them were ports, where they felt they had – not a race problem, but like South Shields, who said, 'We are boycotting because we have a large number of coloured seamen here, and we've always had a harmonious race relations'.



*Clive Nelson:* I think the point Alan made about wanting results as well, that was my impression of the late '70s, that activists could see results: the liberation of Zimbabwe really made people think, doing things you can get results. White minority rule had been defeated in Zimbabwe, and South Africa was the last one left there, let's get on with it, and I think that was an impetus in the late '70s and into the early '80s as well.

*William Beinart:* Are you consciously aware of anglicising the movement? They just chucked out the South Africans and took over?

*Mike Terry:* I don't think it was quite like that! I have commented that when I first was in the AA Executive, apart from John Ennals, who was the chairman, I was the only non-South African or British person who was not in some sort of relationship with a South African, and it took me about six months before I could understand what was happening, because they all turned around different acronyms which meant absolutely nothing to me and names of people who meant nothing to me, and it was a very strange experience.

I don't think it's fair to say that, because there were South Africans who continued to work for us and were in leadership positions right through, and I think what changed was the balance. I think that the South African community in London changed, which was a healthy positive thing, in the sense that there was all these young war resisters. You can talk about the Solomon Mahlangu campaign, but that was largely organised by young war resisters who came in and stuffed all the envelopes and organised the pickets and all the rest of it. Then there was a growing number of African students coming over, who then were out speaking at meetings and all the rest of it. There was a change of relationship; up until the mid-70s the ANC had a presence, but even if it wanted activities to be undertaken in Britain, they were done by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, they couldn't suggest that the AA should do something.

The ANC saw the need for their independent existence in Britain from the late '70s onwards, which caused some tensions, because there were times when they would do things which wouldn't quite make sense. They had this whole thing about political prisoners, that they should be treated as prisoners of war, any captured representative. We were saying, yes that made some sense, but you also need to think it through, because if you said everyone should be treated as prisoners of war, they should stay as prisoners of war until the war is over, so how does that square with the campaign we are trying to run for the release of political prisoners. There were reasons why the ANC were trying to do it. I think another area where there were difficulties was in the trade union work. Whereas we were trying to build a base within British trade unions, as the new trade union movement was beginning to grow in South Africa, unions looked for links with those. There were some within the ANC who were very sensitive to any of those kind of relationships being established, for some good reasons, but also in retrospect for reasons of not having sufficient confidence in the trade unions in South Africa, and that caused some tensions.

On some occasions where the ANC was organising a particular activity around about the time we were trying to organise something, and there's a limit to how many people you can persuade to turn out – those kind of things. One or two of these were sensitive policy questions, the trade union one especially. Then there were problems: take the concert for example, where it had been talked through with the ANC leadership and within the Movement that this was a tribute for Mandela, and we had planned the context in which that would happen, in terms of the march and the rally, but I remember even while the concert was actually on, someone senior in the ANC saying, 'How can you have this happening? Oliver Tambo's here, you must arrange to take him to the stage so he can speak from the stage'. Now, all those things at one level had been sorted out with the ANC but obviously they weren't going to discuss it all with every single person in the ANC about what was the thinking behind it. You had problems like that sometimes when there was some sort of strategic thing you were pressing for. One of the biggest events, if not the biggest, was the concert on Clapham Common, which was in '86. Either at the time or just afterwards, a leading figure in the ANC gave an interview in *Time Out*, I think quite openly criticising the Movement for not sufficiently reaching into the support of the Conservative Party and the business community. We'd just turned out these huge numbers of people, and there was a problem, in that if you turned out a huge number of people in that period, there was a sense in which some of them were reacting on an anti-Thatcher agenda. If we toned down that language, there would be no way in which we could mobilise those kind of numbers, but obviously by having a very sharp line on what the government was doing, it wasn't so much the Movement, it was more Trevor Huddleston, because if he had a chance he would just use very tough language for what the government was doing, that also meant a different kind of diplomacy with business or people in the Tory party became difficult. There was sometimes those kind of issues.

*Alan Brooks:* Mike's being very diplomatic here, I'm going to be much blunter. The fact is, that in the history of the relations between the AA headquarters and the ANC in London, we went through some very difficult times, particularly in the late '60s. I had a foot in each camp of course. I could go to ANC meetings because they treated me as one of them, and later on I was invited to Lusaka to help set up their research office at their headquarters. The ANC comrades clearly regarded as some sort of terrible disease I suffered from, that I had to work in the Anti-Apartheid office, they did not have a good word to say about the Movement. I hope this doesn't feature in the histories of the movement, because it's actually trivial in my view. It was all about exilitis, the frustrations, the impossibility of doing anything effective. I often saw the relationship between the ANC and the AAM as like a very long-standing marriage, where each partner knows the other's faults and strengths and weaknesses, and you get on each other's nerves something terrible, but it hangs together somehow, and then when things you go well you forget about all that, and it's always been a wonderful team, but it wasn't always.

One of the things was that the Anti-Apartheid Movement was much better organised than the ANC.

*Clive Nelson:* That used to happen on the ground as well quite a bit. We used to have quite a few problems sometimes outside South Africa House. For two years I was

organising regular events there, basing it on political prisoners, and I could sort out most of the problems, but what I couldn't do was ever get agreement with the ANC who was speaking, because they were the only ones. Occasionally when I managed to line up someone else, if they didn't agree it was 'Clive has made a mistake again', and the ANC would just go on and speak for the whole time, and all the other speakers that got lined up in a lunch time never got on. Apart from that we got on tremendously well on the streets.

*Mike Terry:* I think the point that Hilda just made is actually quite important, and that is, it must have been very difficult if you were South African, you came out into exile, even the later generations, and had some position, some role and responsibility. It's your struggle, it's your country, you know the people who've died, who have given their lives, who have been tortured. Then suddenly you come into this situation where all the campaigns are being organised by these British people who don't really understand what they're doing, and I think one has to be conscious of that aspect of it as well, which was part of the tension, here were these people usurping what really should be the preserve of the ANC, although I'm not sure it was 'anglicised'. I mean we had Welsh and Scottish people as well. If there was a change while I was there in terms of people we employed and people on the Executive, I would still agree essentially with what Alan said, and that is if we had stayed as being a campaign that had responded to the nuances of South African politics, instead of the imperatives of British politics, we wouldn't have made the kind of advances that we did.

I think that's terribly important. I think the success of Anti-Apartheid was because it had a single objective, and because it didn't let itself get diverted, even by certain members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement itself, who wanted to widen the issue always, bring in Ireland and other things. The ANC had a larger agenda, and I think by focusing on that one agenda, 'We are against apartheid, we want to help end the apartheid system, free those who are in prison', I think that was the success of the campaign.

But it was more complicated than that because we didn't just focus on being against apartheid, and if we had done so we could have gone off in all kinds of directions, like the codes of conduct. We certainly wouldn't necessarily have been supporting sanctions and the boycotts. In the '70s it was a big issue for us, the whole current of opinion that said we should be influencing British companies in South Africa to pay their employees more money and to have better conditions. It was only because of our links with the ANC and these much maligned South Africans at the centre, Abdul Minty and some others, that we held to that line, and it wasn't an easy line to hold to in the early '70s, there were a lot of pressures. Same with the black consciousness movement, I think maybe we were too suspicious, but there were always people looking for other groups, other movements, in South Africa to support, and if the Anti-Apartheid Movement had been totally at the centre – if there hadn't been South Africans in it and it had been totally taken over by the Brits, it could have gone off in all kinds of directions. The crucial thing was the combination, and that those South Africans who set it up had a vision of having a British movement, but at the same time they had a very clear picture of where the movement should be in relation to a strategy for South Africa. They didn't always get it right. The

armed struggle was another thing; it would have been a lot easier to disavow the armed struggle. You would have got a lot more support, and you know you can argue about the armed struggle, but it was a component of the eventual success of the South African movement, so it was that combination that was crucial and the way that worked out.

*Tony Hollingsworth:* This is a quick point in relation to what Mike Terry just said. I know that in the politics surrounding the first of those concerts and the politics surrounding the second of those concerts, there was an enormous change that came about. From the first one, where I was clearly not talking at all to the ANC, just talking to yourselves, and the ANC were a hidden group of people behind that, politically we had to keep them hidden to keep up our vow that this wasn't an ANC operation, to the second one where the ANC then were out and Mendi [Msimang] was in every meeting we were having. It was an enormous change, clearly Nelson was out of prison, the ANC was re-forming, everyone was intending to go back, and the second event, there were some horrific scenes in the planning of it, where at that point there was a great hostility at times to me, at times to yourself, at times to other people in the movement, from South Africans, whereby they obviously felt that that was theirs, the second event was their broadcast platform, and they should be dominating it, was the spirit of it all. Whereas the objective of that exercise was given very very clearly by yourselves and Bishop Trevor Huddleston, which was to try and get Nelson Mandela heard by as broad an audience around the world as possible. To be able to do that, you still had to bring together a whole load of stars that would allow it to happen, allow him to break into the television audience, but that was a completely contrary situation from the emotion that was boiling over amongst South Africans exiled in the country. It was violent and difficult, people were shouting at you about having been in prison and you're a white television producer. All those things. you were being ridiculed in some meetings as well. I think right at the end there, there was a screaming tension as I remember it.

*Margaret Stanton:* I would have thought with any solidarity movement in any country, that you have to be guided by the people from inside, that we couldn't have built a movement here without the close links, however strained the relationships, because we could not have decided on policies independently. What strikes me about this discussion this afternoon, is that there was so much going on at the centre which we in the provincial groups were certainly quite unaware of. It's come out rather strongly I think this afternoon that there were these considerable links which had to be worked on, and worked through, and there was the guidance; I was aware there must have been, particularly in the later years. In the provinces the work was quite different, and this does show, if you're writing a history of the Movement, that what happened in London, in particular, was very different from what happened in the rank and file, the grassroots, the provincial groups around the country.

I am conscious of this afternoon, that there's no representation from Scotland, which had a very strong group I think for most of the years that I was working, and Wales of course, and these were well away from the centre of all these exile influences and ANC influences, and taking the line from London, which very often we found extremely tough. Particularly in our working days, when we were working and we got a call from somebody

in the office to say, 'Margaret, you're near to Tamworth aren't you, could you go up this evening, we can't get a speaker up there?' I'd go up to Tamworth, not having a car, and find that there were no trains back, and fortunately a good comrade there went right out of her way to take me back. But it was quite often that there were these last minute calls from the desperately overworked head office to the desperately overworked volunteer chaotic groups, and we had to face it, these tiny little groups who were struggling to survive a lot of the time, and it was only the devotion of a handful of people that kept it going through the years. But we certainly wondered about all these head office meetings and discussions.