

# New Straits Times

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## New mandate for Pairin

Only the other day, Mr Altaf Gauhar, secretary-general of the Third World Foundation for Social and Economic Studies (co-sponsor of the South-South II conference held in Kuala Lumpur), paid a tribute to Malaysia for its commitment to democracy. The democratic way of life has in fact been enshrined in the Rukunegara.

But when the two-month long legal wrangling, public disturbances caused by demonstrations and bombings in March, relentless opposition to the fledgling PBS, and defections within the PBS itself (reducing the ruling party to a paper-thin majority within the State legislature) had brought Sabah to the edge of political turmoil, Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan decided to go back to the electorate and seek a fresh mandate. The electorate has obliged in no uncertain terms. The triumph (winning 70 per cent of the seats including victories in opposition strongholds as well as more than half of the total votes cast) shows that the PBS is more broadly based and supported than the outcome of the 1985 elections had indicated.

Although Usno remains a credible force by keeping 12 seats, it has clearly lost ground. The absence of Tun Mustapha Harun, the party's charismatic leader and father-figure, has no doubt contributed to its decline. Berjaya has again been rebuffed, and left high and dry with a solitary seat in the new State Assembly. The PBS has won a stronger mandate this time. Sabahans have shown that they want a new leadership at the helm of the State.

The people's expectations have been aroused; they rightly want to look forward to a better life in the future. The ruling party must not only provide an effective and just administration; it must also show itself to be multi-racial in word and deed as well as in spirit. The PBS has pledged to bring the people in Sabah into the mainstream of socio-economic development. Although the PBS has not promised the spangled heavens, it must — as the ruling party — deliver the goods. There are lessons to be learnt from past mistakes. It is one thing to win elections and another to translate expectations into reality. History is full of leaders who distance themselves from their people as a result of success going to their heads.



DR OLIVER TAMBO

# The voice of the black masses

BORN at Bizana in Eastern Pondoland, Eastern Cape, and of peasant origin, he received his early education at Ludebe and Johannesburg. He went on to Fort Hare University College where he graduated in 1941 with a B.Sc. degree.

After being involved in student strikes and expelled from Fort Hare, he obtained his Education Diploma and taught at St Peter's Secondary School from 1943 to 1947, where his students included the late Duma Nokwe.

In 1948 he began studying law and started in legal practice with Nelson Mandela, who is now serving life imprisonment on Robben Island, in December 1952, establishing the first African legal partnership in South Africa.

He was one of the founders of the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League in 1944, and successively its national secretary and national vice-president.

In 1949 he became a member of the national executive of the ANC and secretary-general of the organisation in 1955,

holding the position until 1958 when he was elected deputy president-general.

In 1954 he was served with Government orders under the Suppression of Communism Act, banning him from attending all gatherings for two years and restricting his movements to the districts of Johannesburg and Benoni for the same period.

In December 1956 he was charged with 155 other members of the Congress Alliance with high treason. And in 1959 he was served with a further Government order prohibiting him from attending any gatherings for a period of five years.

The practice he and Nelson Mandela had set up as a means of defending Africans charged with "crimes" was seriously affected. He could not now travel to places like South West Africa (Namibia) as he had done before, to represent the Africans facing political charges and involved in political disputes with the Government.

A week after the Sharpeville shootings on March 21, 1960, and two days before

the declaration of a state of emergency on March 30, he was directed by the ANC national executive to go out of the country in order to put the case against South Africa in world forums.

Mr Tambo's role in arousing world consciousness has had an immense impact on international opinion about South Africa. Since coming out of South Africa in 1960, he has earned the respect of many world figures by his honesty, modesty, his incisive intelligence and his historic indictments against the South African regime at the United Nations and other world platforms.

So ably has he presented the case against South Africa that he has come to be regarded as a man whose authority cannot be challenged on such issues. The movement he leads, the ANC, is regarded as the sole authentic and representative voice of the black masses of South Africa.

He is the president of the ANC and chairman of the political-military council.

# The people shall govern

**Dr Oliver Tambo, president of the African National Congress, fighting to free his people from the tyranny of apartheid in South Africa, was in Kuala Lumpur for the second South-South summit. He received the Third World Prize on behalf of**

**Nelson Mandela, the African nationalist serving a life-term in Robben Island Prison, Cape Town.**

**Special writer CHANDRAN NAIR spoke to him in a rare and wide-ranging interview during which he clarified the aims and aspirations of the ANC.**

**Q: COULD you please tell us about yourself and your involvement in the liberation struggle.**

**A:** I find it very difficult to answer that question and talk about myself. I have been involved since the 1940s continuously. I left South Africa at the time of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. I have since then been working on international solidarity, securing international support as well as being involved in the internal struggle. I was one of a very few at that time to leave, but since then thousands have left and hundreds returned to carry on the fight within South Africa.

We in the ANC have continued to operate within in spite of being banned and made illegal. The ANC exerts its presence in South Africa and to all intents and purposes is a lawful organisation in the sense that it has people defending it, campaigning on the basis of its slogans, and programmes.

The position today is that the ANC leads the armed struggle despite being banned and this is quite an achievement.

**Q:** Many associate the ANC with the armed struggle only and are probably not aware of the overall strategy. Can you elaborate?

**A:** The ANC could not conceivably abandon political action. After all we

the basic political struggle. In fact we understand the armed struggle to be a form of the political struggle by means which include violence.

The countries bordering on South Africa cannot stand up to South African aggression if they are to provide bases for us. So we have to have



People at a rally in Durban, South Africa, hold Freedom Charter posters as a protest against apartheid.

from South Africa, we did so.

**Q:** The issue of economic sanctions is one that is commonly raised. The Reagan administration and various Western European Governments have ruled out direct action of these lines based

this and we are asking the international community to make sacrifices to impose these sanctions. Everyone is going to suffer. If we call it a crime against humanity, let us do something about it.

With political assistance we have gone across the globe, to every country we could reach to obtain funds and assistance in kind.

In Africa, several countries and the OAU contribute towards this

the Pretoria regime with military, economic and diplomatic links. They have an interest in perpetuating what they call a crime against humanity.

**Q:** You have just had a meeting with our Prime Minister. Has there been any discussion on how

make sanctions unnecessary. And we have experienced this abolition before. And the general position of our people is that we shall see how it works. We are not encouraged.

Anyway the struggle goes on. It is not just



History is full of leaders who distance themselves from their people as a result of success going to their heads.

Datuk Pairin will have to face realities and he has shown his capacity to do so by accepting the fact that he needs to work closely with the Federal Government. Sabah's future is intertwined with that of Malaysia. But state and federal interests can never be in complete harmony. The events of recent weeks have shown this to be true.

Sabah has suffered from lack of effective leadership in the last few months and Datuk Pairin has been quick to appoint three Deputy Chief Ministers to reflect the inter-communal base on which he has staked his reputation. The appointment of the other members of his Cabinet is to follow soon. Sabah will have to get back on its feet and fast.

you encounter

A: The ANC could not conceivably abandon political action. After all we decided on the armed struggle after operating peacefully for nearly 50 years and the last 10 years we have seen a very extensive mobilisation of the people throughout South Africa. And although they are non-violent, the mass movement is very strong and thus has been contained by increasing use of armed violence by the regime.

And we believed that through political action and non-violence we could force the regime to make substantial reforms at that time. And when we decided on the armed struggle it was to embrace another dimension without abandoning

to be a form of the political struggle by means which include violence.

So our armed struggle is an integral part of our political struggle and we have carried this out in our strategy. We have concentrated a great deal of attention on political work, political organisation and political mobilisation.

## Independence struggle

We regard this as absolutely crucial for the success or effectiveness of our struggle. Part of the reason for this is that our armed struggle cannot be based in rear bases, outside the country (as is the case with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, Frelimo, MPLA).

African aggression if they are to provide bases for us. So we have to have bases in the people, in their political activity.

Their political activity provides the base in which we invest our armed struggle. So we have had to develop political activity along with the armed struggle and another important component of the struggle is external pressure.

We have given equal attention to all of them and within South Africa our struggle combines these three elements.

Q: The Pretoria regime has often cited the existence of military bases of the ANC in the front-line States as an excuse for its military activities across its border. What is the ANC's position on these allegations?

A: We have never tried to establish any bases or operate from the front-line States. From the beginning we have understood this is not possible given the position of these countries.

The ANC was established in 1912 by all these countries. For many years the fight was against British rule and the ANC resisted attempts to incorporate the protectorates into the Union of South Africa. And similarly the ANC resisted South-West Africa (Namibia) being handed over as a mandate to South Africa.

So we have supported the independence struggle of these countries, as being a struggle for our own independence. When they achieved independence, this was our victory. It was the same struggle, the same people. We had an interest in protecting that independence.

We thought the greatest advantage for us is that they should be strong, economically and politically stable. But we knew that because of our involvement with them, the South African regime with its fascist tendencies would not hesitate to send its army to occupy a country. We understood that. So we ourselves had a strategy of avoiding using these countries as bases. And we did not, but South Africa says we do, so they could put pressure on these countries to act against the ANC.

What we did was to go through these countries. These countries could not be blamed for us going through, as they did not participate nor assist us. So it was our own decision not to have bases. If we were living there in the front-line States and were then told to leave by the host under pressure



# GREAT STYLE, PERFECT FIT.

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and various Western European Governments have ruled out direct action on these lines based on their ironical and dubious concern that it is the black majority who will suffer. Could you give the ANC point on this.

A: Well first of all if you consider who is using this argument you will find it is those circles that are benefitting from the apartheid system and its preservation. And it does not matter who says it, we can look at it from the point that it is in the interest of the status quo and it is people who do not want to see an end to the system.

Those people calling for sanctions are not thinking of what they will suffer or not suffer. Sanctions would have the effect of creating economic problems and weaken the regime to a point where the regime would have to choose between running the country or feeding the demands of the international community.

We have no doubt whatsoever that if they had to make this choice they would find no interest in continuing apartheid. It has no future anyway and it is not worth destroying the whole country just to maintain a system without a future.

So they will be compelled to abandon apartheid and save themselves. No: save us. They have no interest in saving us. In fact it is irritating to hear people say that we shall suffer.

What will we suffer that we have not suffered already? And what can you suffer, which is worse than death? And apartheid is a killer. It kills people, genocidal. Just by the way it works, it kills thousands. They talk of starvation, but it is starvation created by apartheid. And then the shootings that are taking place to defend the system. As for the arguments about unemployment, millions are unemployed anyway. This is something we have always had as black people. It is nothing new.

## Profits of apartheid

And people who are prepared to sacrifice their lives must be ready to sacrifice their jobs. This is our position.

When we say we want sanctions, it is insulting our intelligence to be told that we do not know it is us who are going to suffer. How can we not know? We do not think it is going to be easy to destroy apartheid. It needs sacrifice. We are doing

it a crime against humanity, let us do something about it.

When it was necessary to put down Nazism, no one said "we are going to suffer". They sent hundreds, thousands of troops to fight it and killed millions and it was most wicked. We have a Nazi system in South Africa and it's going to take sacrifice to destroy it. We cannot preach it out of existence, we cannot argue it out of existence, it is going to take sacrifices.

We are asking the international community to back up its condemnation by making the sacrifice. And if they do not want to, let them not say that they are not sacrificing out of pity for what

## QUOTE

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we are going to suffer. We do not want their pity. If they do not want to act, then they should say "we do not want to act because we will suffer" or "we need the profits of apartheid and cannot do without it".

Q: From what quarters does the ANC get assistance and what form does it take. There is a common tendency to portray the ANC as a Soviet or socialist bloc backed terror organisation.

A: We proceed from a position of relative weakness. And we want to make up for that weakness by seeking international support in political, diplomatic and material terms.

At the diplomatic and political level, support is worldwide, the result of information we have given out. There is another form of support, which is material support and this takes two forms. It acts to isolate South Africa economically and culturally and that is where there is room for much more improvement. The cultural boycott is very strong.

Economic sanctions in the form of severed economic links have been carried out by some countries while others have selective sanctions. Then there is the material as-

kind. In Africa, several countries and the OAU contribute towards this material assistance in the form of food, transport and weapons. Outside Africa we get massive assistance from the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, and also Italy and Austria. We do not receive much assistance from West Germany or Britain. The socialist countries give us material assistance mainly in terms of food and clothing and also weapons. We do not buy, we ask and we are given.

We have asked the West, but they will not donate, and only the socialist and African countries give us weapons.

We receive political

support in the US but no funds. The Caribbean countries support us both politically and materially. However, the problem usually arises from what we get from the Soviet Union. And I must explain that.

## Crime against humanity

If the Soviet Union was not involved no one would complain. The reality is that we go to the Soviet Union just as we go to every other country. And we make our request, which they consider and make a decision on.

We deliberately go to the Soviet Union just as we deliberately go to the US. We accept Soviet aid because we asked for it. It is the countries not supporting us who complain the most.

Why should we not go to the Soviet Union? We go to the US too. They do not give us anything. Should we not accept Soviet assistance just because the US does not give?

If we did not accept help from those who offered, then we would run into problems and that is what some would like to see. The biggest complaints about the Soviet assistance comes from those who have sustained

Q. You have just had a meeting with our Prime Minister. Has there been any discussion on how the Malaysian Government and its people can support the legitimate struggle of the people of South Africa.

A. We have not discussed specific ways and shall continue with diplomatic support. We think the position of your Prime Minister at the Commonwealth conference in the Bahamas was most powerful. And in a way it coincided with what we have always known to be the policy of support of this country for the struggle.

We in the ANC have not asked for more except for Malaysia to press for sanctions. I was very pleased to observe that the Prime Minister, in spite of the decision at Nassau, stated that the key to success was through the imposition of sanctions and not through negotiations. Negotiations will just be protracted by the South African Government.

Q. Does this mean that the ANC does not view with optimism the role of the Eminent Persons Group who are negotiating with the Pretoria regime?

A. I am worried that the South Africans want to employ the same tactic of dragging negotiations so that the Commonwealth Group will never quite finish its task. This is because the group may feel the need to await the given time and that's what the South African tactic is all about. Time to complicate the situation.

Q. Could you say what attitude the ANC has to the rumours arising from the activity of the Eminent Persons Group that negotiations with Pretoria may give rise to something positive?

A. Caution. The ANC is very, very cautious. The South African Government has a very clear record of dishonesty. Dishonesty which they have displayed to all in their dealings over Namibia and agreements with Mozambique. Thus we do not believe they will uphold anything that they may negotiate with this group. We do not see much hope and we are not excited.

Q. Do you see the latest announcements by the Pretoria regime to abolish the pass laws as an attempt to win some middle ground and appease some of the international condemnation?

A. Yes. It is being presented as the beginning of a process of dismantling apartheid, so as to

works. We are not encouraged.

Anyway the struggle goes on. It is not just about the pass laws. It is about all the laws which are being enforced to repress the black people. The struggle is about the power to make these laws. Who makes them? The laws must be made by the Government of the people and not by the Government of a minority. We take this announcement in our stride. We know the law will reappear under another name.

Q. What sort of greater South Africa do you envisage after liberation? What sort of society does the ANC wish to create?

A: The most glaring problem of South Africa is that of white minority rule which is a legacy of colonialism. Thus we must end white minority rule as has been achieved in other parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

And the future South Africa will be a country of equality. People of different racial origins being treated as South Africans working together, living together, running the country together, without domination, without discrimination.

## Democratic aspirations

Therefore, when we talk of majority rule we are talking about the majority of the people of South Africa, not the black people of South Africa. All the people, all the citizens who will be dealing with issues common to all. The white people of South Africa given their present privileges will have to adjust. We will not have to adjust as much. Some people talk about accommodating the white minority by having special arrangements.

This we will not do as that only perpetuates the system. I feel, however, that with our help the white minority will over a period of time adjust to the non-racial society we will create.

And the Africans too will have to understand that liberation does not mean African domination. This is very important and part of the political education that the ANC carries out presently.

Now then the other area is that of the economic policy. We have adopted the Freedom Charter, established in 1955, as a statement of our aims. It is a definition of the goals of our liberation movement, it is the

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