

Oliver

The Graduate School and University Center
of the City University of New York

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Graduate Center: 33 West 42 Street, New York, N.Y. 10036-8099
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President Oliver Tambo
51 Alexandra Park Road
Muswell Hill
London N10
ENGLAND

Dear Oliver:

Gail and I can hardly begin to tell you how valuable as

well as enjoyable we found our interview sessions last week. Over three days, your memory became better and better. Of course, as you know, we were not concerned with your factual descriptions of past events but rather with your judgments about various episodes, developments, and personalities.

I could go on, but the purpose of this letter is to thank

you for your generosity in giving us so much of your valuable time when, there are so many demands upon you.

We especially appreciate your offer to have a copy of the

Green Book sent to us for inclusion in From Protest to Challenge, and we look forward to receiving it. We believe it will enrich the recorded history of the movement, illustrating the ANC's tough-minded re-thinking at the end of the 1970s.

I shall repeat the understanding with which our conversations

ended: that before publishing any reference to your comments during

our interviews, we shall send you the relevant sections of our manuscript for your review.

We were happy to find you looking so well and wish you a continued and rapid recovery. Again, our best wishes to Adelaide.

Sincerely yours,

March 11, 1991

Political Science

The Graduate School and University Center

of The City University of New York

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Dear Oliver,

I am writing to add my thanks to Tom's for your generosity in giving us so much of your time last week. With the many pressures you are under, it was wonderful that you could take this time to help enrich the record of the long historical era now ending.

With best wishes for your continued recovery and safe return to South Africa in the coming months,

Oliver Tambo
51 Alexandra Park Rd.

Muswell Hill
London N10

March 9, 1991

Yours sincerely,

Gail M. Gerhart
Senior Research Associate

642-2146

The Graduate School and University Center
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October 2, 1990

Mr. Oliver Tambo
51 Alexandra Park Road
Muswell Hill
London, N10 2DG
ENGLAND

Dear Oliver:

It was good to talk with Adelaide a second time, today, and to hear of preparations for your historic return to South Africa. I've thought often of the pressures on you and have been anxious not to add to them but was encouraged by Tebogo Mafole, just after he returned from London, to inquire into the possibility of seeing you. But, of course, I fully understand that this is not a good time. I do hope that you are recovering steadily so that all goes smoothly with regard to your return.

I am pleased that I may be able to see you after you come back to London. Gail Gerhart and I are aiming to complete the background essays of volume five (1964-1979), which will take up about 270 printed pages, during January. When I see you, I would have a draft manuscript in hand and therefore need only a relatively brief time to ask questions of clarification and interpretation.

Despite any qualms you may have about a biography, I fervently

hope that someone will write a biography that does justice to your role in the liberation struggle. Meanwhile, our own background essays, keyed to accompanying documents, may contribute to such a book and to other writings about the past quarter-century.

Last May I sent you the transcript of my interview with Oscar Dhlomo about the ANC-Inkatha meeting in October 1979. Adelaide was not sure that she had seen it. Assuming that it arrived, it may be buried in some pile by now. So I shall enclose another copy and also my covering letter.

Gail joins me in wishing you all the best.

Warmest regards

The Graduate School and University Center

of The City University of New York

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May 7, 1990

Mr. Oliver Tambo
51 Alexandra Park Road
Muswell Hill

London N10 2DG, England
Dear Oliver,

I am delighted that you are progressing so well that you are now back in London. It is tempting to comment on the staggering developments in South Africa, but all I'll say is that they will surely reach a high point when you return. I look forward to that day.

I hope that this letter is not an additional pressure on you.

I have been wanting to write to you for some time but have avoided doing so. Today I ran into Tebogo Mafole, and when I mentioned that I was thinking of writing, he encouraged me to do so.

Is it possible that you may be disposed to comment on my enclosed interview with Oscar Dhlomo regarding the October 30-31, 1979 ANC - Inkatha meeting? I saw him during a five week visit before Christmas after having been denied a visa earlier in the year. I hope to interview Cap Zungu about the meeting, once I get a green light from Pallo Jordan to go ahead. An interview with Thabo would also be desirable, but he is so busy, especially when in New York, that it is unrealistic to expect time with him.

Your comments on Dhlomo's account would be a valuable addition to the historical record. Or you may wish to write only general reflections on that important meeting. Such reflections could be written from the standpoint of today and deal with the significance of the meeting as seen in retrospect.

Or - of special value- your comments could be written from the standpoint of October 1979. What was your thinking about the meeting at the time? What perceptions and expectations preceded? What was the verdict once the meeting was over?

If you have time to write, you may want your comments to be treated as background for my understanding and no; to be quoted. I

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O. Tambo
May 7, 1990
Page 2

would abide by your wishes, of course. On the other hand, my hope is that you would be willing to be quoted or referred to.

I have been assuming that you are aware of the work Gail Gerhart and I, with wide-ranging South African cooperation, are doing to bring From Prot-eate to Challenge up-to-date in three new volumes: 1964-1979

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1980-1990, and biographies, to be published by Oxford University Press rather than by the Hoover Institution.

Shortly after spending an enjoyable evening at your home, I wrote to Adelaide on October 31, 1988 and enclosed a copy of the inventory of ANC documents that Gail and I had collected as of that time. We are now putting together our third supplement.

We are now looking forward to completion of the first new volume, which will be patterned after the published volume three, that is, about 825 pages long, including about 265 pages of background essays. Although at this stage it is too early to write "definitive" essays, we are anxious that they be as full and fair as possible.

I retired a few years ago and have been working full-time on this project for over two years. Last November I was 70 and had the great fortune of celebrating that event during a brief visit at the home of Walter and Albertina Sisulu. Gail is teaching at Columbia University but, happily, will be able to work full-time during the next academic year. So we are moving as rapidly as we can.

Please give my warmest regards to Adelaide, and very best wishes for your complete recovery.

TGK:aj
Enc.

Copies: Tebogo Mafole

Pallo Jordan

Interview with OSCAR DHLOMO. - Karis

Durban.

18 Dec 1989.

TK: Oscar, if you could just briefly reflect upon the origin of the meeting between Inkatha and the ANC in London in 1979. How it came up, what initiatives were taken by either side defining the meeting, in other words the genesis of the meeting in London.

OD: Yes. Well, Tom, this meeting arose out of a number of exchanges. Personal exchanges mainly as well as correspondence between Dr. Buthelezi and Mr Tambo over many years. There came a time when Dr. Buthelezi's aide at that stage, Gibson Thula, would meet the ANC people from time to time overseas. He met ANC people, and the agreement was that, it was about time for the two groups to get together. And so, the meeting was planned between INKATHA and the ANC and the venue was to be London.

TK: In those years the Chief himself occasionally met ANC people abroad.

OD: Oh, of course. Over many years he would meet Mr Tambo either in Africa or in Europe or in America. So, there was an on-going relationship, first between Chief Buthelezi and Mr Tambo as persons, and secondly between the two organizations collectively speaking. So I suppose this meeting in London was supposed to be a culmination of this on-going yet informal friendly contact between the two leaders of the organizations, ANC and INKATHA.

TK: What explains the timing of the meeting? What was there about developments around '78 and '79 that suggested that it would be good to have a meeting about that time? The meeting took place on October 30 and 31, 1979 in London. Why that particular time?

Any special reason about the developments in South Africa and within the ANC that indicated that that was appropriate timing?

OD: Not directly. I think that in one sense this was simply the year that it became possible to bring the two organizations together at a meeting. But secondly, I think there was a realization on both sides that unity had to be promoted at that stage. You will also recall that that was the time of the Lancaster House Talks in

London, which had brought Mr Nkomo and Mr Mugabe's groups together. In fact, when we were in London, we took time off to visit Mugabe's people and Nkomo's people just to exchange views with them. So it wouldn't be far fetched to assume that coming together of ZANU and ZAPU in Zimbabwe and their establishment of what became known as the Patriotic Front with the assistance of the OAU leaders must have either way given the [idea] to both groups that unity in action was desirable.

TK: Could you explain those two words, "in action"? Was the

perception of INKATHA that what could come out of this meeting was some kind of agreement about action? After all, the ANC was an outlawed underground organization and INKATHA was not. What were the expectations from the meeting? That there would be some kind of division of labor perhaps?

OD: Yes, certainly. INKATHA came to the meeting expecting that

consensus could be reached on certain areas where there could be cooperation. And on other areas where cooperation would not be possible, given the circumstances of the two organizations at that stage, for instance, we did not expect that there could be cooperation on the armed struggle because our situation inside South Africa will rule that off. We thought there could be cooperation on supporting certain activities and campaigns that would pressurize the South Africa government to think about genuine political change.

TK: I will just mention something, I really don't expect any

response from you, but years ago, I talked with a couple of ANC people who were somewhat optimistic that when infiltration and other activities occurred underground Chief Buthelezi would look the other way. But that is the kind of thing that isn't explicit.

But then, what can you tell me about the kind of preparation that went into preparing for the meeting in advance? Whether there were papers prepared? Were there any memoranda circulated in advance for the meeting or presented to the ANC at the meeting?

How much thinking was put into the preparation of the meeting?

OD: Well, on our side--, I cannot speak on the part of the ANC--,

on our side there was preparation. There were memoranda presented at the meeting by Chief Buthelezi, and Mr Tambo also made quite a substantial speech in welcoming the INKATHA delegation. And his words were very encouraging. I cannot go into what he said, but I will say that he warmly welcomed the delegates and expressed

delight in that some of us he had been reading about, but was now seeing in person. He praised Chief Buthelezi's role internally and clearly said that some leaders in South Africa, possibly the leaders of the movements [for independent homelands] would be regarded as puppets but certainly not Chief Buthelezi.

TK: Now, to your knowledge, the various memos that came out of that meeting, to what extent were those memos made public? Any at all?

OD: No. They have never never been made public. I know for a fact.

TK: By neither side?

OD: By neither side.

TK: And how many were they? Can you give me some idea of how many, how long?

OD: I think on our side there could have been one or two memos.

Basically the first memo attempted to probe the ANC on a variety of issues.

TK: This was presented at the meeting?

OD: Yes, presented at the meeting with an expectation of a response of course. Probing the ANC on a number of issues: negotiation, what it would take the ANC to negotiate? The armed struggle, how realistic it was? Will the strategy change if the circumstances changed in South Africa? That kind of probing. It was a memo that wanted to prompt dialogue on these crucial issues. And this is interesting, of course, because we are talking about ten years ago, and those are the very same issues that people who visit the ANC today, ten years later, will always probe the organization.

TK: There was another memo, a second one you said?

OD: I am not quite sure, there could have been a second one. I remember this one very vividly.

TK: I am trying to visualize how this worked. If there was one memo with questions and probing, that suggestss perhaps there was

a somewhat formal meeting where people had memos in front of them. Was it that kind of formal, meeting or was it more informal kind of give and take with or without an agenda? Was there an agenda?

OD: There was an agenda. The meeting was, well, formal in the sense that there was a chairman. When we started, we worried about who would be the chairman, and Mr Tambo himself suggested that the late Bishop Alpheus Zulu could be the chairman. So he chaired the meeting.

TK: The entire meeting?

OD: Yes.

TK: Two days?

OD: Yes. So in that sense you would say the meeting was formal.

It became formal also when the two leaders were speaking. Both of them spoke from notes. I think Mr Tambo's notes were hand written. They weren't typed. But it was a quite, a very, his speech,

historical.

TK: You mean Tambo's speech?

OD: Tambo's speech, yes. It was, other than the welcoming remarks and so on, he did give us a history of the ANC's armed struggle. How the struggle had at last become more intense now, starting from a position where for many years it was not possible to intensify the struggle. They had to be training and so on. He gave a very interesting history of the development of armed struggle.

TK: During the meeting was it understood that there were persons on both side who were taking notes, minutes?

OD: Yes, I think so. We always take minutes and~

TK: All those notes existed on both sides?

OD: Yes. We do have copies of those notes of the meeting. I know that the ANC people were also taking notes. There was the London representative, at that stage, Mr. Cap Zungu. He did take notes.

TK: Cap Zungu?

OD: Yes. He took notes, and then of course there was an agenda.

There was an agenda which consisted of certain items like, you know it was a mutual briefing session. The ANC would brief us on their perception of the South African situation and their expectations, and we would brief them on our own. Mr Tambo asked Thabo Mbeki to brief us on the ANC expectation, and I think I was asked by our side to brief the ANC on developments that we expected. And then there was another item on the areas where there could be cooperation.

And then of course there was a debate which was not argumentative at all, but quite heated on issues like armed struggle, disinvestments, sanctions.

So we ended up saying, we can't agree with, . . . these were the areas where there couldn't be unity because of our differing positions. For the ANC being outside the country, armed struggle could have meaning. For us inside the country, it wouldn't have meaning. It didn't have meaning for the ANC themselves when they were still inside South Africa. So there was that understanding. There was also, I think, a realization that the reason why there was no understanding on these issues was that there had been no consultation before. The ANC adopted its stand on these issues and INKATHA adopted its stand on these issues, so we seemed to be realizing that these consultation, we were having in 1979 was a belated consultation. We should have had this consultation before.

TK: There had been quite a few individual meetings between

INKATHA and ANC people, including the Chief and Tambo, but there had never before been a serious consultation.

OD: No. This was a first serious organizational consultation, discussing specific strategic issues.

TK: One other preliminary question: there was an understanding at the time, which apparently has been adhered to ever since, that these memos and these minutes would not be made public, and then as far as you know they had never been made public on the ANC side. Have you made them public?

OD: Yes, except that there is a misunderstanding there. When one reads the ANC's version of the undertakings made at the meeting, their version differs from our version. What we understood the

agreement to be was that the substance of the discussions at the meeting will not be revealed.

TK: Substance?

OD: Yes. Not that the meeting took place. That wasn't subject to any embargo at all. It would have been impossible on our side to

hide that the meeting had taken place. Look, we had a delegation of 30 people. We had travelled legally through Jan Smuts airport to London, and in fact we didn't even go straight to London. We went to Rome, and meetings were arranged for Chief Buthelezi and officials of the Italian government just to camouflage. We had a tour of Rome and later we flew to London, attempting to make it appear that we were not just flying directly to London to meet the ANC. But this is what happened: when we arrived at Heathrow a young Afrikaner gentleman simply approached Chief Buthelezi and said, "Excuse me, Sir, when will the press statement [conference?] be held after your meeting with the ANC?" And we were all shocked. Chief Buthelezi did not even respond to this gentleman. He just walked away.

TK: One of the charges of criticism is that the publicity which

appeared in the South African press-- it's been some time since I read it so I will put it rather crudely-- was somehow set up by Chief Buthelezi himself, that he arrived at the meeting with photographers, with reporters and that this was his doing. So can you give me what the story is, as you see it?

OD: I will take the story from, as I am doing, from the time we

arrived confronted by this representative of the South African Afrikaner newspaper based in London if there would be a press statement after the ANC-INKATHA meeting. Our response was just to walk away from him.

TK: How had he known about the meeting?

OD: Now we don't know how he knew about the meeting. It is

possible that the ANC office in London, I presume, might have spoken to some journalist in London because this did not end there. Another journalist, the bureau chief of the Sunday Times. I think, Suzanne . . . who now works for us in Clarion Call . She was the representative of the Sunday Times in London. She knew about the meeting. Then she told us that she heard this from Cap Zungu.

Ok, we went to a hotel, the Exelcia Hotel. That is where we would meet the ANC people and plan for that.

TK: That was the preliminary meeting in planning?

OD: Yes.

TK: So that was not the first meeting?

OD: No. It was a meeting where we would work and plan for the formal session the following day.

TK: Can you tell me about that? Who met there?

OD: Right. Thabo Mbeki and Cap Zungu came over and myself and Gibson Thula went to them. So the four of us set down, worked the agenda. In fact, the agenda I was telling about, we worked out there. Then there was a slight hitch about the strength of the delegations. The ANC thought we were too many.

TK: Oh, that is another question, there were 30?

OD: There were about 30 of us.

TK: Had there been an understanding before you left South Africa as to how many the delegation should be?

OD: No.

TK: It was just left up to you?

OD: Yes, it was just left up to us.

TK: What had they expected? Were they surprised?

OD: Well, they were surprised that we were so many. Couldn't we cut down on our delegation?

TK: That was a request or a suggestion?

OD: Yes, and we said well, no, it wouldn't be practical. We had brought these people all the way, and we had deliberately made our delegation to represent the Women's Brigade of INKATHA, the Youth

Brigade as well. So we said, come on, we are not going to vote here. Either increase your delegation as well or leave it at that. I remember, for instance, Johnny Makatini was not supposed to have been at the meeting, because he had been in London and had gone back to America.

TK: New York.

OD: And, I think the ANC decided to recall him to the meeting.

TK: Oscar, when you say Johnny was not supposed to be at the meeting what do you mean by that? Was there some understanding in advance before you left South Africa as to who is supposed to be there and who not?

OD: No, we discovered when we arrived there that Johnny would not be one of the delegates because he couldn't stay on. He had an engagement in New York.

TK: Whether or not he had stayed on, was that of any concern to you, whether he will be there or not? There was no understanding that he should not be there?

OD: No, no, no. Not at all. There was no such understanding, but we found it rather surprising that a senior member like him, he would not be in the delegation, when the majority of the people we were meeting were in fact members of the Executive Committee.

TK: So how did this particular matter get resolved then? Was it resolved that four men --

OD: Yes, we resolved the issue at this four-man meeting, and we took the decision back to the leaders.

TK: What was the resolution of the problem?

OD: Well, that we will bring our delegation. . .

TK: The whole delegation?

OD: The whole delegation since there was not going to be any voting and there had been no prior agreement that there five people

on one side and then five people on the other side. We should accept it as such.

TK: And was the question of the number in the ANC delegation left up to them?

OD: Yes, we left it up to them as well.

TK: So when that meeting ended you did not know how many ANC people there were to be?

OD: No, not at all. We didn't think the whole issue was as formal as that. So, o.k., that was the first meeting between the four of us.

Then the following day we were picked up and taken to the venue of the meeting in London.

TK: So, that was the very next day?

OD: Yes.

TK: Where was the venue of the meeting in London?

OD: I don't know that I should tell you that.

TK: Should I turn off the tape recorder or?

OD: Well, it was not in the offices of the ANC.

TK: It was not in the offices of the ANC.

OD: No, definitely it was not in the offices of the ANC. I don't know--

TK: Was it a home or --?

OD: Not a home either. It looked like it used to be an office or a board room. I don't know but it was in an area I wasn't familiar with.

TK: But it was a building at least large enough for many people? How many people did show up on the ANC side?

OD: Mnn.! Let me see if I can remember. There was Tambo, there was Nzo, there was Nkobi, there was Zungu, there was Mbeki, between eight and ten.

TK: All sitting around one big table?

OD: Yes. Round a big table, the chairman there.

TK: Just to get an overview of how the whole conference was.

So, you met the next morning and you met for two days, can you give me some idea of how that two days' time was provided? With the entire group together for two days or did you split up?

OD: It wasn't as formal as that. We met for two days in plenary.

In fact all the time we were in plenary.

TK In the same place for two days?

OD Yes, in the same place. Then we would have lunch there.

TK At the table?

OD At the table, you know, finger lunch and then we would take a train back to our hotel.

TK: A train?

OD: Yes.

TK: A Metro?

OD: Yes, the Metro.

TK: And go back to the airport hotel?

OD: Yes, but Chief Buthelezi was always taken by limousine organized by the ANC back to his hotel, and Bishop Zulu. But the rest of us would board the Metro back to the hotel.

TK: You didn't have a fleet of cars?

OD: No, not at all. We actually said to ourselves, the ANC has so much money, why don't they allow us to travel in cars instead of the train. That was, as I said, a joke.

TK: Can you just indicate the amount of time that you were together? What time were did you begin the first day, when did the meeting end, and the same for the second day?

OD: Well, it was a full session. Probably from ten o'clock, lunch, and a meeting after lunch, say up to five.

TK: And then the second day?

OD: Same procedure except that on the second day another thing happened. The phone ran in the meeting room. Cap Zungu went to it. Again another journalist asked him if there was going to be a press statement. No response.

TK: When you arrived at the venue for the meeting, there weren't any photographers there?

OD: No, not at all.

TK: And it was only the second day that the other phone call came, asking for what, a press meeting?

OD: That's right. Was there going to be a press conference?

TK: And the answer was again?

OD: Well, Zungu referred to Tambo and Buthelezi and what did they say? They didn't want to say no, I think. They would be confirming that there was a meeting. I think he was instructed to say that he didn't know anything about the meeting, something about that nature.

TK: I am sorry, who was supposed to say that?

OD: Zungu, yes. Over the phone.

TK: That he knew nothing about the meeting going on?

OD: Yes, that is right, or the press conference.

TK: And the press apparently did not know where the meeting was taking place then, otherwise they could have come?

OD: I think they didn't know, but here was a number.

TK: The telephone number.

OD: The telephone number. They had gotten the telephone in the directory. Normally they would have a street address.

TK: Normally yes.

OD: So--

TK: So, what finally happened?

OD: Ok, then on the last day the ANC promised that the issues addressed in our memo would be discussed by the full executive in Lusaka, and they would come back to us around, I think their meeting would be in December, and they would come back to us early in the new year with responses, and perhaps another meeting.

TK: Perhaps another meeting. Was there any definite time for another meeting or did it all depend upon the Executive Committee discussion?

OD: No, there were no definite plans, no date was fixed. A lot would depend on the ANC Executive Committee's discussing what was in our memo and then come back to us with a response.

TK: What would to be useful at this point Oscar, instead of going into any detail about precisely what was in these memos, could you describe for me just how the tone of everybody, how everything ended up? What kind of understanding, if any, was arrived at? What was the atmosphere? In other words, what was the conclusion of the meeting, as you saw it, of course?

OD: Well, it's really amazing. The atmosphere was so friendly, Tom.

TK: What are you looking for?

OD: My bag. . . cigarettes.

TK: Oh, here is your bag.

OD: The atmosphere was so friendly. There were no

recriminations at all. We parted with the understanding that the ANC was going to look into our memo, discuss it thoroughly and then come back to us. So much that, we got invited to Mr. Tambo's home.

TK: When did you go there?

OD: In the evening.

TK: The evening of the second day?

OD: Of the second day.

TK: The entire delegation?

OD: Yes, all of us went there and other people in exile who were members of the ANC were invited.

TK: Oh, really?

OD: Like Mr. M.B. Yengwa, he came. Some wives of ANC officials also came.

TK: Where you there for dinner or. . . ?

OD: Yes, we were there for dinner, you know, a get-together party. It was very inspiring. We ended up singing the National Anthem together.

TK: At the end of the meeting?

OD: Yes. With the ANC doing this and INKATHA this.

TK: The ANC with its fist up?

OD: That is right.

TK: And INKATHA?

OD: And INKATHA standing at attention.

TK: Standing at attention?

OD: That's right. So, it was a really very friendly parting.

TK: Now, in contrast to that, were you had some harder moments during the vigorous discussion, could you just indicate the nature of those hard moments and whether there were any things said on the ANC side, or maybe by any particular individual on the ANC side, that was a signal of trouble to come. What, in particular, was a hot issue?

OD: Well, the hci issues were, they centered around the issues which we differed on, you know. Not on principles. It was simple strategies on which we differed. I think we were all agreed on the objective, but the strategies were the problem, like armed struggle, like disinvestment. Chief Buthelezi was saying, look, it is very difficult for me inside the country to support disinvestment because people will always turn to me and ask for jobs. This is what happens.

TK: What about the issue, the constitutionality of the ANC's decision, the way in which the decision was made to embark on armed struggle? Was there some challenge from the Chief about the validity or constitutionality of the process by which that decision was reached?

OD: No. As far as I recall that was never on issue. We differed, as I say, on these two main issues: armed struggle and disinvestment. Again the reason why we differed was that we understood the ANC to be saying we should be supporting those two.

TK: Supporting the armed struggle?

OD: The armed struggle and disinvestment.

TK: How could they propose that you should support the armed struggle?

OD: Now that was our question. How could we do that when we were operating from inside?

TK: What was their answer?

OD: Their answer was, rather keep quiet than about them.

TK: Don't oppose it?

OD: Don't talk about it. How can we not talk about it? We are asked these questions everyday. They are real for us because we are in the country. So, there was no ultimate solution to that.

TK: ANC people have said that they very well understand why people inside the country have to oppose it.

OD: Oh no, not at that time.

TK: Not at that time.

OD: Perhaps today, because they seemed to me, especially Mr Nzo, they seemed not to appreciate our logistical problems in supporting things like the armed struggle and disinvestment.

TK: Am I right in my understanding, in my memory, that there has been, maybe since then, INKATHA criticism of the constitutionality, if that's the right word, of the ANC's decision to embark on the armed struggle? Hasn't that been one point of criticism from the INKATHA side?

OD: No, I would not put it that way. I think INKATHA has pointed out the difference between what INKATHA calls the ANC Mission in Exile and the ANC internally, with the view to saying that as time went on, the ANC Mission in Exile, which originally was Mr. Tambo alone sent to propagate the evils of apartheid and to gather support-

TK: Before Rivonia.

OD: Yes, just before.

TK: Oh, it was even before the announcement of Umkhonto. That was December '61, and he left early '60.

OD: On the instructions of Chief Lutuli. So, that's our understanding of developments. He went overseas and as time went

on this ANC under the leadership of Mr Tambo got more and more removed from the internal ANC, even from the people who in fact sent Mr Tambo, to such an extent that they began to take decisions without recourse to people internally. And then they even, well, developed some autonomy. They became the real movement, the real ANC. They held their conferences, they elected new officials and so on. And I think that is what INKATHA has always tried to point out.

Now, about the armed struggle, it is a fact that the decision of the ANC to embark upon armed struggle, a decision that was taken here, it was not taken overseas, did not enjoy the support of the entire ANC, not even the leadership of the ANC, and that is a fact.

TK: Because it wasn't possible for a conference to be held?

OD: It wasn't possible to take that decision. Those who wanted, who felt that the ANC should now develop a military wing were asked to do that away from the movement.

TK: That was the initial effort to protect the rank and file.

OD: Protect the rank and file but also underline that this was not a decision of the ANC. It was a decision of some members. . .

TK: Soon afterwards, however, it became clear from the statements of the people outside, after the Lobatse conference, that Umkhonto was claimed to be an ANC creation.

OD: No, [historical by] it certainly was not. It was a creation of a few members within the ANC--

TK: and within the Congress movement.

OD: including Mr Mandela and so on, and they failed to sell it to the entire National Executive Committee, including Chief Lutuli.

They said, "look this is your vision, we have no right to stop you from it, but please separate what you plan to do from the ANC."

TK: Oscar, let us go back to the conference in London.

OD: But that wasn't at all a [matter for] discussion in London.

TK: At that meeting. That is what I wanted to know.

Just to go back to the press coverage. At the very end of the meeting, was there any point for example, when you went back to the airport to return, wasn't there at some point a presence of photographers, reporters? When did that happen? Because there was a big front page story in the Sunday Times about the meeting. I don't remember at what point that story appeared. But to repeat though, wasn't there some point in London at some place where the delegation encountered reporters and photographers?

OD: Oh, OK. Let me start by saying at the meeting, in fact, there was a discussion of whether this meeting should be made know or not in South Africa.

TK: When did that discussion arise? The first day, the second day or at dinner?

OD: I think it was the second day. I might be wrong, but it was still at the meeting. And the ANC appeared to favor an idea that the meeting should not be made known at all. INKATHA, Chief Buthelezi said, " No, gentlemen, that is not practical in South Africa. Look, I have brought young people with me. It is known in South Africa that we are out of the country. I, Buthelezi, can't leave the country without anybody knowing that I am outside the country. It is unrealistic to expect that the meeting will not be known, the fact of the meeting. So, let us say we won't hide the fact that there was a meeting, but what we will not do is to say what was discussed, because if we try to hide that, the security police back home will soon get hold of these young people, they will torture them and they will be forced to say more than we want said. So to forestal that let us not hide that there was a meeting."

TK: But then if there is no explanation to the press about the substance of the meeting, wouldn't that be a reason why, in order to find out what happened in the meeting, the police will still interrogate these young people? I don't see how just publicizing the existence of the meeting would forestall police questioning of the delegation of what exactly was said at this meeting. Did that happen?

OD: No, that did not happen. When we returned there was a big debate about whether that should in fact be done. Some people were actually goading General Coetzee at that stage, he was the head of security, to detain Chief Buthelezi.

Side Two

OD: . . .who were urging General Coetzee, who was head of security, to detain Chief Buthelezi. We may use the term "thumb screwing"

TK: Thumb screwing, detaining, yes.

OD: That is right. And General Coetzee, in fact, was reluctant to do that and said "well, it is not as easy as all that," you see. And they were saying that because it had become known that there was a meeting with the ANC.

Now, when we arrived in South Africa, I suspect it was a Sunday because at Jan Smuts we bought the Sunday Times, and this was headline news, I mean the meeting.

TK: So, in London there had been no press conference at all then?

No interviews at all in London?

OD: No, not that I remember of.

TK: I don't remember that front page story in the Sunday Times --

OD: Yes, the story again did not, other than saying that there was a meeting between the ANC and INKATHA in London--

TK: What was the thrust, the main point of the article? They must have speculated about the significance of the meeting?

OD: Yes. Something like this is an important historical meeting which will lead to a unified powerful block by two major black political organizations that met in London. Nobody knows what might come of this. That kind of thing.

TK: Wasn't there also, as I remember, a meeting, maybe later after the meeting, with some officials in the British foreign office? That's from my memory now. Or maybe the Chief himself or one or two people met some officials in the foreign office? I remember reading about such a meeting.

OD: Yes, I think the Chief himself. One again was trying to

create a reason for being in London, I think he did meet some people in the foreign office. I can't remember if it wasn't the then Minister

in the foreign office, Richard [Loews], but he did meet-

TK: This all happened after the meeting? I mean how soon after the meeting did the delegation return to South Africa, do you remember?

OD: I think a day after.

TK: So this meeting might have occurred then, after the--

OD: That is right, but it wasn't INKATHA's intention to hide the fact that there was a meeting. We never thought that. . . I remember, for instance, that when we see Mugabe and Nkomo, they knew that we were in London to talk to the ANC, so you know that was no secret at all.

TK: At what point did you meet Mugabe and Nkomo?

OD: I think we met them after the last day.

TK: You met them in London?

OD: Yes. Well, Nkomo was staying with his delegation . . . , and

Mugabe was staying somewhere else with his delegation. So we went to see them, to be briefed on the progress of the Lancaster House talks. We got a very thorough briefing from both of them.

Once again, we didn't intend to hide that we had come there to meet the ANC. It wasn't a point we thought could be hidden with any success.

TK: Who was present from the INKATHA side in those meetings?

OD: Nkomo and Mugabe?

TK: Yes.

OD: Myseif, Buthelezi, Mdlalose, Gibson Thula, well there could

have been other younger people. But the four of us were there, oh and Denise Madide was also there because most of the Zimbabwean people were at school with some of our colleagues. Nkomo and

Mugabe were [with] Buthelezi and Mdlalose, Dr Zlobo was at the university in Lesotho with Dr. Madide. George [Soyindika] was at school also with Mdlalose here in Pinetown, Marian Hill.

TK: There was a personal connection there.

OD: Yes. And Dr. [Mshaukunzi] was at medical school here with both Madide and then Mdlalose. So there was quite a jolly-

TK: It's 10:29 and I have been taking a lot of time asking very

detailed questions about this meeting. There is one big question that there really isn't time to go through in detail, but I would like to have your reflection on the period of what might be called breakdown in relationship. It isn't until the middle of 1980, June or so that you have a public statement by Nzo condemning INKATHA, and then you have the press conference of Oliver Tambo, with a sad tone, also critical. And then in between it seems that one issue that soured relations was the student boycotts and different attitudes towards that. Looking back, from the perspective of these two statements, looking back over the proceeding of four, five or six, seven months, how do you explain how things reached the point that they reached? And what could have prevented that? Big question.

OD: Yes, it is a big question. Well, first thinking in retrospect,

first I think that the ANC might have been disappointed with the outcome of the meeting without showing. Well, they didn't show it. We were friendly until we parted. They might have thought that it would have been possible for INKATHA to act as some sort of

internal surrogate of the ANC. You know, carrying out some of the

policies internally or facilitating those policies. I am saying this because I am aware that at that stage as a result of some of the discussions that we had, the ANC was seriously looking for an organization internally that would fulfill their goals. But they didn't tell us that this was the case. I suspect that when they analyzed the situation after the meeting they found that Chief Buthelezi and INKATHA could certainly not be that kind of an organization.

TK: Cannot be a surrogate?

OD: That is right. I think they felt that, "look, we misjudged the

situation. Buthelezi and INKATHA are not interested in total independence. They are not going to support or facilitate our

policies internally. Look how they argued about sanctions and the armed struggle at the meeting."

TK: Could there have been another point, that the ANC may have been critical of INKATHA because INKATHA, didn't INKATHA consider itself co-equal with the ANC?

OD: Yes, that could have been another reason.

TK: Did the INKATHA people think of themselves equal to the ANC as a political force?

OD: Certainly I would say so. We did not go to the meeting, now this was unconscious, we did not plan this, but I can say that we didn't regard the ANC as a superior organization to us.

TK: So, there was a built in potential for rivalry?

OD: No, I wouldn't say so. I would say there was a built-in potential for equal partnership and cooperation. That is what we expected.

TK: But from the stand point of those in the ANC who felt that they were the preeminent organization, to encounter another organization which did not fit into this broader umbrella would be a basis for criticism.

OD: Of course, not criticism even rejection.

TK: Rejection.

OD: Because I think the ANC does have that unfortunate attitude, perhaps born out of many years in exile, their ready acceptance in various international forums. They have tended to propagate the view and attitude that they are the premium grand organization.

They represent the oppressed people in South Africa, and there can't and there shouldn't be any other body that claims to do so, worse if it wants to do so independent of the ANC.

TK: So, then the public break in mid 1980 goes back perhaps to that perception of the ANC that you are speculating about?

OD: I should think so.

TK: So, it wasn't just the school boycotts?

OD: No, no. I think the school boycott was a pretext enabling the ANC to publicly break from INKATHA, disassociate themselves from INKATHA and in fact say quietly that it was a mistake to have met with INKATHA in 1979.

TK: When did you get an indication of the way things were going?

Did you ever get a communication after the National Executive Committee had discussed further what had happened at the meeting?

OD: No, in fact Nzo's statement and subsequently Tambo's came as a big shock to us because we were awaiting a response to the memorandum presented by Buthelezi, and what we got was this statement of Nzo.

TK: So, by the end of December and January you must have been waiting for some kind of response in January?

OD: Yes, in fact we were, for a response to our memorandum.

TK: Did you make any effort to elicit a response?

OD: No, no. We did not make any effort because before Nzo and Tambo's statements came out, something quite peculiar had happened already. When the Sunday Times published that there was this meeting, certain things happened in South Africa. Dr. Motlana, I can't remember in what context, but I think he was asked for his comments about the meeting and his response was no, there couldn't have been a meeting.

TK: He denied the existence of the meeting?

OD: . . .between the ANC and traitors", he said. "The ANC cannot meet traitors."

TK: He used that word?

OD: Yes, definitely he used that word. And that again caused a rift between Motlana and Chief Buthelezi, hence Jesse Jackson tried to.

TK: Oh yes, solve the problem-

OD: Now, after that Motlana statement, I think Tambo as well

issued a statement saying that the report that there was a meeting, there was no such a meeting, Tambo said.

TK: Tambo said that?

OD: Yes, that there was no such a meeting.

TK: How could he say that? Was it based upon a definition of the meeting?

OD: No, he was just denying that the ANC and INKATHA had ever met. Once again, going back to that debate in the meeting where we had already indicated that it was not possible to hide that there was a meeting, we had thought that Mr. Tambo appreciated that fact. But here he was now issuing a press statement which was published in South Africa.

TK: The press conference statement about June in the middle of 1980 or was that an earlier statement?

OD: No, no it was immediately when the news about the meeting after the Sunday Times report.

TK: After you returned?

OD: After Motlana's 'traitor statement'. Then Tambo issued a comprehensive statement saying there was no such meeting. That statement was about when?

TK: About when?

OD: I would say less than a month after the meeting. Then Percy

Qoboza appreciating this controversy - 'there was a meeting there was no meeting' - happened to go to your country, and when he came back he for the first time now confirmed that no, in fact there had been a meeting.

TK: And so were there any other statements made by Oliver

Tambo between the statement you just described and the press

conference I think in Lusaka in June 1980 when he made his critical statement? There was no other statement?

OD: Was it in Lusaka? Oh, Nzo was in London.

TK: I think so, yes.

OD: The first person who showed us that things were not right was Nzo.

TK: And then after that was the press conference by Tambo?

OD: Right.

TK: I think he then said that he wasn't going to say more about it.

I think he did make that statement. (Unfortunately that phone is going to ring in a couple of minutes.)

But then, can we conclude with this: One other question: do you have any reason to, any knowledge, whether or not Nelson

Mandela, how much he knew about this meeting and what his reaction was to this? Has there ever been any special exchange between the Chief and Mandela?

OD: Before the meeting?

TK: Or after the meeting, or with regard to the meeting?

OD: No, except Mandela's recent letter to the Chief. I don't know if you have seen it. The very last letter.

TK: The very last letter? I haven't caught up with that. What is the point of that letter?

OD: In that letter Mandela, well it is a very frank letter thanking Chief Buthelezi for his birthday message, thanking him for his consistent campaign for the release of prisoners.

TK: How long ago was that letter?

OD: it was just a few months ago. And actually I have a copy.

TK: Maybe I can find it somewhere.

OD: I will find a way. I can phone my office to fetch it here. . .

But then in that letter, Mandela says he regrets that the friendship which existed in the 1970s between Tambo and Buthelezi is no longer there, and he urges that it could be revived. The cooperation between INKATHA and the ANC which existed in the 70s is no longer there, if it could be revived, and then of course he commented about the violence in this area and asks all leaders saying he can't take sides, he has no information in jail, but he urges all leaders, to cooperate in ending the violence. That is the only reference to.

TK: The relationship between Buthelezi [and Mandela].

OD: Yes.

TK: You know, on this point of relationship at the leadership

level, I attended a four day conference at Columbia Law School a couple of months ago, on a post-apartheid constitution, and Thabo was there and he spoke at a seminar, a well attended seminar, separate from that meeting, and with regard to coming together with INKATHA, the ANC coming together with INKATHA and UDF and COSATU about the situation in Natal. He said off hand that on the question of how many representatives there would be from each group, as far as he is concerned, there could be a thousand representatives from INKATHA. That wasn't the issue. As I remember what emphasized as a stumbling block was the importance for the Chief of having direct communication with Tambo himself and that the arrangement would have to be at that level. Is this new to you?

OD: Yes, it's new to us because in these peace talks that we have

been having, we have in fact produced with the UDF-COSATU a peace proposal. The idea was that this peace proposal, before its actual implementation will have to be endorsed at a meeting of the presidents of the four organizations, UDF, COSATU, ANC and INKATHA. And the Chief wrote to Tambo suggesting a number of dates when this meeting could be held.

TK: You will have to go outside the country.

OD: Of course, that was the understanding. Outside the country

in London, that was sorted out.

TK: In London?

OD: Yes.

TK: When was this agreement sorted out? How long ago?

OD: It is almost two months ago now.

TK: I see.

OD: Now he wrote to Tambo suggesting dates in September, October, November. No response until Tambo got ill. And of course there is now this stalemate. As I was saying to you, tomorrow we might start informal talks again and try and revive this initiative.

TK: Now in the light of Tambo's illness I suppose the next person will be Nzo.

OD: Well, yes. If they had said Tambo is now ill, we can't attend this meeting, but here is a man who is acting in Tambo's position can he attend? Surely, we would have said yes. No acknowledgement even of the letter.

TK: Now is that crucial to INKATHA that a meeting have the highest level ANC official present?

OD: Well, that was not INKATHA's view. It was the view of the drafting committee consisting of us in INKATHA- - myself, Frank Mdlalose, Musa Zondi

TK: The youth leader?

OD: The youth leader, and a chap from Mpumalanga where there is violence, called Qobizizwe Mkehli.

TK: There were four people?

OD: Yes four people. And then on that side it was Dr. Diliza Mji, Alec Erwin, Jay Naidoo of COSATU and Sipho Xabashe.

TK: The eight of you actually met?

OD: Yes. We met for several days. We produced a peace proposal, it was a very comprehensive one. We would have solved not only this

violence issue, but also this issue of conflicts and reconciliation.

But we felt that to lend legitimacy to the peace effort and to let the people on the ground see that this issue has the support of the top leadership, the leaders must first meet and endorse this proposal and then say to us "go back, have it implemented."

TK: And the leaders would be the Chief and say Tambo, if he was well I?

OD: The Chief, Tambo, Elijah Barayi of COSATU, Archie Gumede of the UDF.

TK: Those will be the four people?

OD: Yes.

TK: So that is more-or-less where it stands now?

OD: That's more or less where it stands now.

TK: Now, a final question: Oscar, this is speculative, but when Mandela is released, and things, are in such fluidity now, everything is happening so fast, do you see some conjuncture of circumstances when there could develop, maybe over a period of time, a kind of unity between the ANC and INKATHA? If that can happen, how might that happen?

OD: Well, I would say that Mandela is the only person now, both in this country and outside, who has the potential to bring about that kind of view. I say potential advisably because it depends on what influence Mandela would have over the ANC membership once he is released. Remembering of course that once he is released he will lose all the respect, the aura that surrounds him at this moment, and provided that he can retain the influence that he has within his organization, I think that he is the only person who has the potential to bring about unity. He is able, perhaps the only black leader today, who is able to communicate with all the competing political forces, including the National Party, PAC, INKATHA, the UDF, COSATU, and so

on. There is no other leader who is able to do that.

TK: Is your mood for the near future, say the next several years, how would you characterize your mood? Optimistic, pessimistic, skeptical, what?

OD: Oh, on the general situation or on unity?

TK: Or with regard to the relationship between ANC and INKATHA in particular?

OD: I would say I am cautiously optimistic. If certain steps are taken, the unity would be possible. One crucial loophole, of course, would be, if the ANC insists on the strategy of trying to isolate and phase out Chief Buthelezi, isolate him from INKATHA and single him out for rejection. . . , as they are doing at the moment, then unity would not be possible. Because that's an ill-advised strategy. You can't isolate the Pope from the Roman Catholic church. So if they can abandon that strategy, I think the chances would be good, but if they persist with this strategy, well, they are making the work of people like us who favor this kind of unity even more difficult, because you can't persist working for this kind of unity when the leader of your movement is being rejected. It is better if they rejected me, for instance, because I will say, "Ok, I don't mind that is not important, the important thing is unity." But if they do that to the leader, then they are simply castrating us. We can't go further and forge the unity because we will be accused of attaching much significance to the. . . the leader of the movement.

TK: Strini Moodley is waiting for me downstairs.

OD: OK.

TK: Oscar, thank you very much.

[End of Interview]