

Lecture by the Patron of the TMF, Thabo Mbeki, on Oliver Tambo, as part of the Celebration of the Centenary of the ANC: University of Fort Hare, Alice: October 19, 2012.

Celebrating ANC President Oliver Reginald Tambo.

Principal and Vice Chancellor, Dr Mvuyo Tom, and other leaders of this historic University,
Members of Council,
Members of Senate and the Academic Staff,
Students, President and members of the SRC, and other formations of the student community,
Members of the Administration, trade unionists and workers,
Members of the community of Alice and its environs and other distinguished guests from further afield,
Comrades and friends,
Ladies and gentlemen:

We have gathered here today as part of the celebration of the historic Centenary of the ANC, a short four (4) years ahead of the related establishment of the University College of Fort Hare in 1916.

Understandably, as part of the celebration of its Centenary, the ANC decided that it would devote particular months throughout the Centenary Year 2012 to give the opportunity to the nation to reflect on the contributions to the national cause particularly of those of our patriots and compatriots who had served as its Presidents.

Accordingly, we meet here today because of this, to speak about one of these Presidents of the ANC, the late Oliver Reginald Tambo, who, if he was still alive, would have celebrated his 95th Birthday eight days from today.

I trust that you will pardon me if I do not use this occasion to succumb to the natural temptation to present to you a truncated biography of Oliver Tambo, which you know.

With your permission, given what I have said, I will speak about Oliver Tambo in the context of the historic evolution of the ANC, and therefore the overall liberation movement of our country.

However, before I reflect on this important matter, which is obviously relevant to the Centenary of the ANC, I must state that I have prepared this Lecture deeply troubled by a feeling of great unease that our beloved Motherland is losing its sense of direction, and that, we are allowing ourselves to progress towards a costly disaster of a protracted and endemic general crisis.

Today, as we meet here at Fort Hare, I, for one, am not certain about where our country and nation will be tomorrow, and what I should do in this regard, to respond to what is obviously a dangerous and unacceptable situation of directionless and unguided national drift.

Among others, that feeling of unease is informed by questions I have not been able to answer about what happened which allowed the eminently avoidable massacre at the Lonmin Marikana mine in the North West Province to happen.

Among others, this tragedy and its consequences seems to have signalled a radical weakening of the national labour relations system which was and is one of the major victories of our National Democratic Revolution, the NDR.

This system is based on the fundamental propositions that the State should put in place the policies to help ensure a thriving economy and the equitable distribution of the national wealth, and a system of industrial relations which would enable labour and capital to negotiate the specific agreements which would give practical expression to the objective of shared prosperity in the context of a growing economy.

My feeling of unease is also informed by what I sense is a pervasive understanding throughout the nation that there is no certainty about our future with regard to any of our known challenges, and therefore the future of the nation.

This is underlined by a troubled pessimistic sentiment among many families in our country about whether their children can expect a future better, contrary to the travails the parents of these young people had to endure, including the students at this University.

My sense of unease is also informed by the fears I know are shared by many throughout our Continent, rightly or wrongly, that they face the threat that because of our internal conflicts, our country could lose its ability to defend its possibility to be an exemplar of resolute African independence, self-determination and African pride, as did Ethiopia during an earlier period of Africa's struggle for her emancipation.

Those fears derive from what the rest of Africa believes is a significant weakening of the binding assurance which our Continent thought it had, that our country would, at all times, serve as one of the important Continental anchors in defence of the right to self-determination of the peoples of Africa and the African Diaspora.

I know that what I have just said might not sit easily in the minds and hearts of some circles here at home and abroad, which I would understand.

However, I also know this as a matter of fact that it will not be possible to correct whatever might have gone wrong, and therefore address our challenges in this regard, unless all of us have the honesty and courage publicly to state what we believe is true.

In this context I am convinced that it would be treacherous to hide our heads in the sand and behave as though we remain on course in terms of the achievement of our shared and various national objectives.

Equally, of course, we must be ready to accept such criticism as might result from everything we say, ready to engage in any consequent open debate – thus to engage in the processes for which I have consistently urged, borrowing on the task the great Chinese people set themselves – to *let a hundred flowers bloom, and a hundred schools of thought contend!*

Obviously, such an intellectual contest would have to be based on the firm understanding that those who control the levers of state power would not misuse such control to stifle or suppress any opinion, regardless of its content, and would also not remain silent when others willfully and recklessly abuse their right to freedom of thought and speech.

I must now return to my required and specific presentation to you about the role of Oliver Tambo in terms of our struggle for national liberation.

This means that I must speak specifically about the strengthening of the organised formations and the movement whose actions ultimately brought about the political liberation of South Africa in 1994.

I must also speak about the processes and struggles which resulted in the historic compromise which led to the 1994 General Elections, and which ended white minority rule in our country and effectively closed the centuries-old period of the colonial domination of Africa and the rest of the world.

I must, as well, pay tribute to the broad liberation movement in our country, in the rest of Africa and the world, not only the ANC, as it engaged in the struggle

to defeat the last, best resourced and most stubborn outpost of the global colonial system, apartheid South Africa.

For over half-a-century Oliver Tambo was a central actor in all these processes.

Correctly to discuss the central theses of my presentation, which I have indicated, I must say something about South Africa as it came to be defined by three-and-a-half centuries of imperialist and colonial domination.

I have chosen to discuss this history, briefly, because it is directly relevant both to our immediate subject of the role of Oliver Tambo in our struggle, and the tasks we face today of the further advancement of the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution, the NDR, to which he dedicated his life.

I am certain that you understand very well that all this is directly relevant to the historic challenge of all revolutionaries to fight for the revolutionary transformation of society, to create a new social order which would benefit the ordinary masses in all these societies.

By definition, and inevitably, revolution means that there must take place a titanic struggle for victory over each other and one another, between and among the forces representing the new, and the forces seeking to preserve the old order.

Logically, in pursuit of their respective and antagonistic outcomes, each of these contending forces would seek victory over each other, in a zero-sum game.

In this regard, I would like to believe that as thinking people, committed to the progressive transformation of our country and Continent, you will have made an effort to understand what have been described as revolutionary processes relating alternatively to our seminal year 1994, and what has been happening, for example, to the African country of Egypt since 2011.

I am certain that from both these processes you will have understood that the neat paradigm I have mentioned, of the defeat of the old and the victory of the new, is not necessarily correct in terms of what happens in actual life.

Very often, these forces, the old and the new, enter into unavoidable compromises which throw up their own challenges. No revolution is worthy of its name if it does not know when to enter into such compromises, and gets lost about what it should do afterwards, in pursuit of its strategic goals.

I say this to make the point that the political victory of 1994 represented such a compromise, which dictated and dictates that the National Democratic Revolution, the NDR, should, while understanding that such compromise

represents an important and historic advance, nevertheless poses the challenge to answer the question about what it should do to continue to pursue its strategic goals.

In this regard, with your permission, I would like to quote a famous paragraph in a book by the eminent revolutionary, Karl Marx, which explains some of the dialectical relationship between the new and the old.

In his "*Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*", Marx said:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionising themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service..."

As they engaged in protracted struggle to make their own history, the masses of our people, who sacrificed everything for the victory of the first strategic objective of the national democratic revolution, achieved this objective under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.

And thus, as we and they were occupied with revolutionising themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, we and them had to take into account the reality we had inherited.

The political compromise of 1994 was born of this concrete and historical reality, in which '*men do not make history as they please*', which signified both an historic and important advance and the definition of particular objective parameters within which the National Democratic Revolution, the NDR, would have to pursue its strategic objectives.

In this regard, as Marx had indicated, the NDR entered into agreements during the 1990-1994 negotiations taking into account the conditions which Marx described as not being its "*self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.*"

I would like to believe that it is obvious to all of us that the complex and challenging reality created by this actuality, which was obviously not unique to our country, would pose a particular challenge to our forces of revolution to develop the necessary strategy and tactics correctly to respond to this reality.

In this regard, I am convinced that our revolution was very fortunate that it had the possibility to draw on the firm foundation which Oliver Tambo had helped

to establish, before he was suddenly and unexpectedly struck down by a paralysing affliction.

Relating specifically to the contribution Oliver Tambo made in this regard, I would not hesitate to underline **the importance of the exercise of correct leadership at moments of revolutionary change.**

In this context I have no hesitation in saying that Oliver Tambo was an outstanding revolutionary democrat, a principal theoretician of the perspective of the national democratic revolution to which the ANC is committed, and consequently a central architect of the popular forces which would have an obligation to lead the offensive to achieve this National Democratic Revolution.

I would therefore like to thank the Vice Chancellor, Dr Mvuyo Tom, the academic staff, students and workers at this historic centre of learning and research, Fort Hare University, which is Oliver Tambo's *alma mater*, as well as countless other African patriots, for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

I say this because I can think of no better location than this particular University, dispassionately to discuss the historic significance of Oliver Tambo's contribution to the realisation of the vision we share of building a better life for all.

I am also certain that you will realise that what I have just said constitutes a particular challenge to you who have followed in his footsteps voluntarily to become members of this centre of learning and inquiry, the outstanding historic incubator in our country of many revolutionary democrats and fighters for African liberation like Oliver Tambo, from our country and from many other countries in Southern and East Africa.

In this context, I believe that we who have gathered here today have no choice but to ask ourselves the vitally important question – **what are we doing today**, during these challenging times for the future of South Africa and Africa, to ensure that Fort Hare University continues to be the incubator of Africa's revolutionary democrats and a centre for the promotion of the objective of the renaissance of Africa, which characterise so distinctively the life of Oliver Tambo!

Thus do I return to what I said earlier about the imperative to speak, even briefly, about South Africa as it came to be defined by three-and-a-half centuries of colonialism and imperialist domination.

I said and say this because I am convinced that the historical processes which produced that outcome dictated the tasks of our national liberation movement,

and therefore the ANC, and must continue, to this day, to inform the central agenda of our National Democratic Revolution.

In this context you would have heard the regular refrain repeated constantly by influential voices in our county and abroad, including through our domestic media, that Oliver Tambo's movement, the ANC, and after eighteen years as our country's ruling party, has no right to blame our current reality on our colonial and apartheid past.

The firm assertion is made that certainly since 1994, what South Africa became from then onwards, was a unique creation of the policies and programmes of Oliver Tambo's movement, the African National Congress.

This assertion seeks to advance the self-serving political proposition that the 1994 political victory wiped our country's colonial and apartheid socio-economic slate clean, giving the ANC the unfettered freedom to inscribe its own 'characters' on this alleged blank slate – to borrow language used during the Maoist years in China!

In this respect I can refer to countless occasions when, in the past, I said that the central and immediate task of the national democratic revolution after the political victory of 1994 was to dismantle **the legacy of colonialism and apartheid**, this evoked major opposition, on the basis of the strange and false argument that the apartheid legacy died in 1994.

What is this colonial and apartheid heritage?

Among others colonialism and apartheid have meant that democratic South Africa has inherited:

- **the legacy of the impact of the most pervasive colonial and imperialist system in terms of the dispossession of the indigenous African majority** and the destruction of its communities, resulting in deculturation, the radical weakening of any sense of African identity, and the destruction of the traditional value system, identified as *ubuntu/botho*, which would ensure African social cohesion;
- **the imposition of a capitalist system of property relations across the board**, originally exclusively for the benefit of the white minority, which has nevertheless educated our entire population, both black and white, to accept the capitalist value system as the only relevant value system which should inform all social behaviour;
- **a related culture of violence**, based on the notion of individual benefit at all costs, and born in part from the absence of a value system and state practice militating against such violence and the practice of state

structures to resort to violence to sustain the oppressive colonial and apartheid system;

- **a predominantly landless, propertyless and unskilled African majority**, constituting more than 75% of our population, which depends for its livelihood on employment in the public and private sectors, but much of which is 'unemployable' because it does not have the skills required by a modern economy and society;
- **an educational system that was consciously designed to produce an African majority which would have no skills** and impetus to enable it to carry out more than clerical and manual tasks;
- **the absence of a rural peasantry with access to land**, steeped in peasant productive culture, having the means and capable of sustaining even subsistence peasant farming, therefore representing a significant section of the indigenous majority capable of acting independently;
- **the creation of an entrenched social order of privilege** and power characterised in the main by an essentially three-layered hierarchy of racial divisions;
- given the foregoing, **the construction of South Africa as a state built in all respects as a racist entity of defined unequal racial communities**, and the later systematic insertion into this by the apartheid regime of ethnic identities and divisions among the African majority;
- **the positioning of South Africa as an economic outpost of the developed Western world**, and therefore a producer and exporter of precious minerals and raw materials, and importer of manufactured goods; and,
- **the positioning of South Africa as other than an African country**, arguing that it occupies a special space as the exemplar of 'modern' human development within a 'pre-modern' and regressive African Continent.

The imperialist and colonial reality we have just sought to describe was accompanied and sustained, as was necessary, by forcible and exclusive white minority rule.

It is therefore obvious that necessarily the ANC as a credible organisation of the African oppressed, even before Oliver Tambo joined it, had no choice but to strive for the reconstruction of South Africa away from the paradigm representative and characteristic of South African colonial reality – which

colonialism the South African Communist Party, fifty years ago, correctly characterised as '*colonialism of a special type*'.

Accordingly and correctly, from the time of its foundation, the ANC set itself the task to end colonial and white minority rule in our country, and indeed our region, therefore to transform South Africa into a non-racial democracy.

It would therefore be correct to say that this was *the first strategic task of the National Democratic Revolution*, which the ANC pursued up to the historic political victory of 1994.

I would insist that *the second strategic task of the national democratic revolution* in our country, consequent upon the political victory of 1994, is the eradication of the legacy of colonialism and apartheid.

I would also insist that *the third strategic task of our revolution is the entrenchment of a national democratic society*, focused on ensuring the permanence of the genuinely democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society visualised in our Constitution, which would define the long-term character of South Africa, as a truly egalitarian society.

Earlier I referred to the historic challenge that faces all revolutionaries to fight for the revolutionary transformation of society, to create a new social order which would benefit the ordinary masses in all these societies.

That challenge of revolutionary transformation has faced and will face the NDR as it has and will confront all three of the strategic tasks I have mentioned.

It must follow from what I have said that I must now return to the matter of the tasks of the NDR, and Oliver Tambo's role in this regard.

In this context I would like to say a few more words about Oliver Tambo, to help explain his role to which I have referred.

Oliver Tambo belonged among a cadre of intellectuals and professionals who passed through the portals of this University, and yet others, including those who came from the ranks of the trade union movement, the traditional African faiths, the Christian churches, the Moslem mosques and the Judaic synagogues, who discharged their responsibilities brilliantly as leaders and activists of our revolution.

Like some or many of these, what distinguished Oliver Tambo are:

- **an unwavering commitment to serve the people of South Africa with no expectation of any personal benefit:** this affirmed a value

system at the centre of which is respect for the fundamental principle and practice that leaders are there to serve the people;

- a sustained determination to conduct himself in his personal life so that at all times he would **never betray the ethical standards** which the masses he represented and led viewed as fundamental to their definition of themselves;
- the commitment, to its fullest extent, of the entirety of **his enormous intellectual capacity and personal energy** to pursue the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution;
- his ability as **an outstanding strategist** to lead the broad forces of the National Democratic Revolution through the twists and turns of an ever-changing and therefore dynamic national, continental and international situation, ensuring that the revolution did not lose its focus on its fundamental goals;
- his flexibility as **a master tactician of the National Democratic Revolution**, requiring the necessary command of detail, which enabled him correctly to identify the tactical manoeuvring which would be imperative to sustain the advance of the democratic revolution towards its victory;
- his **capacity to communicate well-thought-out, clear and relevant messages** to the national democratic movement as a whole about its tasks at all times, which reassured everybody that there was a purpose to their actions and a positive end-game to their sacrifices; and,
- his **ability to ensure the cohesion of the forces of revolution** by taking all the necessary steps, including through even his personal interaction with the people constituting these masses, which reinforced the confidence of these forces in the apex leadership of the revolution, which strengthened their will and capacity to act as one cohesive force.

I am certain that all of you present here will have understood that what I have just said about Oliver Tambo describes exactly the kind of leadership that any period of revolutionary change needs.

I have said what I have about Oliver Tambo to reflect on the kind of person he was, which I would like to believe underlines how rare a leader of the National Democratic Revolution he was, precisely and specifically as such a revolutionary leader.

I must also state this frankly, that I thought it important to state what I believe set Oliver Tambo apart as the leader he was, to underline the fundamental

point that unless we produce other leaders and cadres of the calibre of Oliver Tambo, it is almost inevitable that the National Democratic Revolution will fail.

Everything I have said surely underlines the reality that **the revolution continues**, and therefore demands a leadership linked to the masses of the people, that is capable of leading this revolution, exemplified by what Oliver Tambo achieved in this regard.

We must therefore ask ourselves the difficult questions:

- whether yesterday the democratic revolution produced and has produced the calibre of leadership exemplified by Oliver Tambo, and therefore whether we, who directly inherited the Tambo legacy, lived up to the demands of this legacy;
- whether we cultivated in the past, including when I served as one of the leaders of the ANC, the leadership cadre required by the continuing National Democratic Revolution; and,
- whether the national democratic movement is doing anything now to develop the broad corps of cadres who would gain acceptance by the masses of our people as their genuine leaders for the further advancement of this revolution.

It was to address exactly this concern that the ANC has continuously put on its programme **the task of political education and cadre development**.

Accordingly, what I have said is by no means original, because it has been a central part of the understanding and programmes of the ANC for even more than the almost two decades since 1994.

In this regard I must accept that during the years when I served in the leadership of the ANC, we failed to achieve the objective of sustaining the calibre of a membership made up of politically mature and committed cadres.

This would have made it, as much as it was possible, to insulate our movement from the “staff-riders” who came on board the ANC train, intent to use their membership as a step-ladder to access state power and abuse this power for self-enrichment.

The real and hard truth is that, in this regard, the current leadership of the ANC and the broad democratic movement, at all levels, have inherited this failure, which lies at the base of much that is going wrong in our country.

To return to the central subject of this Lecture, I must take care not to expose myself to the charge that I have presented an image of Oliver Tambo as I

have, without so much as providing even a single fact to substantiate any claim that what I have said is true.

Let me therefore do something to address this potential deficiency.

Throughout his four-and-a-half-decades of active political life, from the 1940s until almost the end of the 1980s, Oliver Tambo played a central role in mobilising and uniting the national, continental and global forces whose sustained united action led to the historic 1994 political victory.

This included **uniting the old and the young** in the 1940s and 1950s mass struggles, as a leader of both the ANC Youth League and the ANC, and the later similar struggles, which played a decisive role in achieving the political victory of 1994.

This also included the truly remarkable achievement of mobilising and uniting the African Continent and the rest of the world, encompassing Governments and nations, all regions, sectional, governmental and non-governmental organisations of note, including the very United Nations, to coalesce behind the South African liberation movement in a common struggle to defeat the apartheid system.

Under his leadership the world constituted itself into the most powerful international post-Second World War solidarity movement, to date, described as the International Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Beginning with the banning of the ANC and the PAC in 1960, following on the banning of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1950, the apartheid regime, supported by powerful international allied Western anti-communist states, led by the US, sought to use extreme repression completely to liquidate all organised opposition in our country to the apartheid regime and system.

We must admit that during perhaps a decade from the early 1960s to the early 1970s, except for the resurgence of university student resistance, serious national organised opposition to the apartheid regime collapsed, and therefore that extreme state repression succeeded in its purposes, imposing on the masses of our people of what we can honestly describe as **our own 'dark age'**.

It is in this context that we must understand the critical importance of the reality that was created by the actuality that Oliver Tambo, originally sent abroad by the ANC leadership essentially to mobilise international support for our domestic struggle, led the processes which ensured the very survival of the ANC.

In the absence of what was done outside our country, and under his leadership, there would have been no organising centre representing the oppressed majority, and therefore the ANC, which served as the counter-party in the complex process which ended with the 1994 political victory.

During the challenging years of the virtual exile of the ANC, and operating in the context of a complicated international situation, Oliver Tambo led the political processes which both ensured that the ANC maintained the confidence of the South African masses, and ensured that these masses remained loyal to the strategic objectives of the NDR.

As the master strategist he was, Oliver Tambo made a critical contribution to the elaboration of the strategic perspective of the ANC at an historically critical moment of the struggle to defeat the apartheid crime against humanity, which resulted in the identification and combined pursuit of the *Four Pillars of the Revolution*, these being:

- **mass action** within the country, involving millions of our people, which came to be represented by such eminent formations as the UDF, COSATU, the South African Council of Churches, the women's, youth and student formations, NAFSOC representing black business, organisations of journalists, workers in arts and culture, traditional leaders, sports people, members of the intelligentsia and the professional echelon, and others;
- **underground action** within the country carried out by organised structures of the ANC, which were based among the people;
- the **armed struggle** carried out by and under the auspices of Umkhonto we Sizwe; and,
- **international solidarity** involving the isolation of the apartheid regime, active support for the ANC and the broad democratic movement, support for the other sister liberation movements in our region, and the defence of the Frontline States of Southern Africa, including all our neighbours, which served as our critically important rear-base, in which capacity they made enormous and selfless sacrifices to help guarantee our liberation.

Further, Oliver Tambo had **the maturity of revolutionary strategic and tactical intelligence**, during the later years of the 1980s, to understand that the strategic balance of power had shifted decisively in favour of our country's National Democratic Revolution, and therefore that the combined force of the ANC, the broad democratic movement in our country, and the world Anti-Apartheid Movement had to prepare themselves for an historically new phase of struggle.

Accordingly, he worked to position the entirety of this movement, at home and abroad, to prepare for this new phase of struggle.

Among others, this included the **preparation for the necessary processes for the transfer of power** in our country through a process of negotiations, which ultimately resulted in the adoption of the important documents – the *Harare Declaration, Ready to Govern*, and the *Reconstruction and Development Programme*.

Accordingly, I will not hesitate to say that the late President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, lived up to his revolutionary obligation to lead our movement and people in the protracted and complex struggle successfully to achieve the first objective of the national democratic revolution, and to lay a firm base for the correct pursuit of the second objective of this revolution.

The success of this first objective, the political victory of 1994, has now become part of the **commonly-owned national heritage**. Happily, now, and quite correctly, all South Africans see it as their solemn duty to defend this heritage.

Nevertheless, and within the context of this Lecture, I would like to make bold to say that all of us should position ourselves as revolutionary democrats, to do everything possible to protect and advance the national heritage I have mentioned – the genuine democratisation and deracialisation of our country, fundamentally based on our Constitution, in its letter and spirit.

Let me now state what I believe is the legacy left behind for all of us by our dear Oliver Tambo, which we have no alternative but to incorporate into our thinking and actions, to empower us to take the next step further along the road towards the achievement of the strategic objective further to advance our National Democratic Revolution.

Essentially this boils down to two major tasks, these being:

- successfully to address the objective of the eradication of the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, this being the second strategic objective of the National Democratic Revolution, the NDR; and,
- producing yet more Oliver Tambos to lead the struggle to achieve this objective.

It would seem obvious to me that as we celebrate the Centenary of the ANC, and therefore the memory of such outstanding leaders of the ANC as Oliver Tambo, and others, our broad movement for national liberation, the national democratic movement, must, as a matter of urgency, undertake an open,

honest and critical assessment of its actions since 1994, relating to the two major tasks I have just mentioned.

I am convinced that in the main, with regard to both these tasks, we have **not**, and I repeat, **not** realised the strategic advances we set ourselves to achieve, these being:

- decisively to break the back of the colonial and apartheid legacy; and,
- to build the national cadre both politically committed and professionally qualified to help ensure the accomplishment of the second strategic task of the national democratic revolution.

In reality the very lively and legitimate national debate which has engaged the country for some time now, and will undoubtedly continue, is exactly about the real or perceived failures of the National Democratic Revolution with regard to these tasks.

Earlier in this Lecture I mentioned various important elements of the colonial and apartheid legacy whose eradication stands at the centre of the achievement of the second strategic task of the National Democratic Revolution.

These include such matters important to the achievement of this task as:

- (i) radically **modernising the mass skills base** especially among the African majority, and therefore changing the system of education and training to enable the achievement of this objective;
- (ii) **expanding and modernising the production base of the economy** through consistently high rates of investment, resulting in sustained high economic growth rates, and deracialising our system of property relations in favour of the national majority;
- (iii) achieving the objectives of **the emancipation of women and gender equality**;
- (iv) systematically addressing the challenge of **the empowerment of the youth**;
- (v) **altering the structure of our economy** to end its historical relationship with the developed world as essentially an exporter of raw materials;
- (vi) significantly **reducing the racial and gender inequalities** in terms of wealth, income and opportunity;

- (vii) creating **the material base to underwrite the achievement of national unity**, and therefore national reconciliation and shared patriotism, thus to achieve progress towards ending the divisive racial and ethnic divisions that were entrenched during the apartheid period;
- (viii) achieving the **sustained and sustainable socio-economic improvement especially in the poor black residential areas**, resulting in changing both the life styles in these communities and the prevalent value systems.
- (ix) a radical **reduction of the levels of poverty and inequality**.

I strongly believe that the occasion of the Centenary of the ANC imposes on all of us the obligation to make **an honest assessment** of how far we have succeeded to address these objectives of the second strategic task of the NDR.

Speaking as one who served in positions of leadership during the greater part of the period during which the NDR has sought to attend to this second strategic task, I must admit, frankly, that our progress has been much less than satisfactory, in some instances bordering on failure.

At the same time I must state this that policies and programmes were put in place to respond to all the major challenges that constitute the component parts of the second strategic task of the NDR I have spoken of.

A serious, honest and detailed assessment will therefore have to be made to determine what went wrong, which has produced what I have described as a much less than a satisfactory outcome, in some instances bordering on failure.

I must also admit that this will require its own separate Lecture and discourse.

At the same time we must acknowledge and welcome the significant progress our country and nation have made in some important respects, which progress we must defend and sustain – exactly one of the urgent and critical national challenges we face.

This progress includes the establishment of a constitutional democratic system, which also entails the citizen and group entitlements entrenched in our Bill of Rights and respect for the separation of powers and the rule of law; the reconstitution of the state machinery to serve the people as a whole; the expansion of access to basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation, education, health, housing and to some extent economic opportunities; the placement of South Africa as a respected member of the African and world community of nations; and, of great importance, the provision to all our people

the assurance of dignity, self-pride and self-worth, enabling all of us to walk tall everywhere in the world.

I say all this fully conscious of the reality that all these important successes must serve as but a base from which we must proceed further and successfully to address the remaining enormous, persisting and debilitating legacy of colonialism and apartheid, and the various glaring shortcomings of the National Democratic Revolution as it has pursued its second strategic task.

With regard to what I have said about an honest assessment of the achievements of the NDR since 1994, perhaps the *National Development Plan 2030*, which I must confess I have not had time to study in detail, seems to have made an important beginning in this regard.

I say this because in its early pages the *Plan* contains the comment made by the Chairperson of the National Planning Commission, Trevor Manuel, in which he says:

“Eighteen years into democracy, South Africa remains a highly unequal society where too many people live in poverty and too few work. The quality of school education for most black learners is poor. The apartheid spatial divide continues to dominate the landscape. A large proportion of young people feel that the odds are stacked against them. And the legacy of apartheid continues to determine the life opportunities for the vast majority. These immense challenges can only be addressed through a step change in the country's performance.”

The Plan also seeks to reflect on the subjective factor which relates to the possibility to achieve the goals of the second strategic task of the NDR. In this regard it says that during the years since 1994:

“We felt our way towards a new sense of ourselves:

- *trying, succeeding and making mistakes;*
- *proclaiming success and closing our minds to failure;*
- *feeling orientated and disorientated through our own actions;*
- *affirming some realities and denying others;*
- *proclaiming openness to the world, yet courting insularity;*
- *eager to live together, yet finding it difficult to recognise shared burdens;*
- *learning to recognise and acknowledge shared successes.”*

With regard to the assessment I have suggested is imperative, I am convinced that we must make a determined effort to defeat the negative national tendencies described in the *National Development Plan* as - *proclaiming success and closing our minds to failure, and affirming some realities and denying others.*

Practically, among other things, closing our minds to failure signifies a perverse and determined refusal to reverse or correct such failure!

In this context I must say that I know of the corrosive and self-serving practice according to which we, sitting in decision-making positions in both the ruling party and the organs of state, would seek to explain away our failures by blaming everybody else other than ourselves, thus to justify and therefore perpetuate our own failures!

Out of respect from what I learnt from Oliver Tambo and others of our esteemed leaders, over many years, I would make bold to say that this manner of proceeding constitutes a betrayal of the kind of leadership expected of us, basing ourselves on the noble traditions handed down to us by these leaders.

To return to what I said earlier about my own assessment that at best, with regard to accomplishing the objectives of the second strategic task of the NDR, our achievements have been much less than satisfactory, in some instances bordering on failure, I must confess that one of the important root causes of this outcome is failure of leadership on our part, among which leadership I have been privileged to serve.

In the context of what I have said, this means that we have an obligation to ensure that our continuing National Democratic Revolution and struggle are led by people who:

- accept completely and absolutely, internalise and practically ensure that their actions are informed by the imperative, **never, in any way, to abuse state power** to advance their personal interests;
- conduct themselves always and practically in keeping with moral practices informed by a **commitment to serve the people**;
- are determined to conduct themselves in their personal lives so that at all times they **do not betray the ethical standards** viewed by the masses they lead as fundamental to their definition of themselves;
- **commit the entirety of their intellectual and other capacities** to pursue the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution;

- have **the strategic ability to lead our country** to ensure that at no moment does it lose its focus on its fundamental goals as spelt out in our Constitution;
- **respect the truth** and are ready at all times to take actions that respond to our objective reality, not informed by narrow party political and otherwise partisan objectives rather than national goals; and,
- at all times can and **communicate a credible message of hope** to all our people, regardless of race, colour, gender, ethnicity and age, which gives the nation an authentic and real sense of certainty about its future.

Those of us who understand the meaning of the sacrifices that were made to achieve our liberation, will know that there is absolutely nothing extraordinary about any of the foregoing in terms of what we should expect especially of the leadership of the National Democratic Revolution.

I hope, sincerely, that nobody will resort to what seems to have become normal mischief, to highlight any part of what I have said to generate short-lived media sensation, thus to divert attention away from the serious national tasks to which we, together, must attend.

I am absolutely certain that all genuine South African patriots, regardless of partisan political affiliation, have more than due cause to celebrate Oliver Tambo as one of our country's most outstanding leaders of the last century.

Unequivocally, and by all accounts, this most pre-eminent son of our people emerged from our rural areas, to establish himself as an international statesperson, equal to any across the globe, during his historical age.

We have gathered here today, at this historic place, the University of Fort Hare, during what I have stated is a moment of great unease in our country, and intimated the same about our Continent and the world, to celebrate and salute one of the Fathers of the Nation, Oliver Tambo, born in Mbizana, a rural area hundreds of kilometres north-east of this centre of learning.

He was also a determined and principled internationalist.

In this context he led the South African national liberation movement, particularly but not only the ANC, to establish firm relations of solidarity with the rest of the national and democratic movement elsewhere in Africa, and throughout the rest of the world.

In this regard, we know that the ANC established strong relations of comradeship and solidarity with various premier liberation movements, among others the MPLA of Angola, SWAPO of Namibia, FRELIMO of Moçambique,

ZANU-PF of Zimbabwe, the PAIGC of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, POLISARIO of Western Sahara, the SPLM of Sudan, and FRETILIN of Timor l'Este.

I would like to take this opportunity once again to express our profound thanks to the MPLA, the government and sister people of Angola for the selfless and all-round support they extended to us to give us the possibility to achieve our liberation.

It was natural that in this regard we would do our best to learn from our reliable ally, the MPLA, about what we should do properly to use our access to state power to serve the people, following the political victory of our own National Democratic Revolution in 1994.

In this regard we took into account the fact that the NDR in Angola, led by our reliable ally, the MPLA, won its political victory in 1975, fully 21 years before our own victory in 1994.

One of the texts we studied in this regard was the book written by the outstanding and veteran British progressive journalist, Victoria Brittain, *Death of Dignity: Angola's Civil War*, published in 1998, and the published interviews she held with leaders of the MPLA.

In this context, in addition to the interaction of Oliver Tambo and others of our leaders with the leadership of the MPLA, including Joe Slovo, we paid especial attention to the recorded observations of the leaders of the MPLA.

In this context we know that one of these principal leaders of the MPLA, Paolo Jorge, said that when an Angolan Government Decree of 1992 allowed Government Ministers to engage in business on their individual accounts:

"That brought a change in mentality - moral values disappeared, replaced by material values."

Yet another principal leader of the MPLA, at one point in the history of the MPLA the immensely popular deputy to the outstanding African and Angolan leader, Aghostino Neto, Lucio Lara, said:

"We (did not pay) a great deal of attention to the ideological problem...I speak of honesty, sticking to one's principles, above all, kindness, generosity. A natural militant (of the national democratic revolution), by definition, is generous...because he (or she is) doing what he (and she) can for the people, without taking personal interests into account...We should have been able to prevent...personal interests, gradually, the little egos, (from) taking over from the generosity which should be the defining characteristic of militants in a party like ours."

“Today...I don't have illusions about many things. In the Angolan struggle perhaps we did (not) have philosophers or sociologists, but we had the words of (Aghostino) Neto (that): 'the most important thing is to solve people's problems.' Once in the Council of Ministers I heard someone say that we should stop using this phrase. I thought maybe he was right, because no one spoke out against him. In my opinion this was when the party began to collapse. The leaders felt they all had the right to be rich. That was the beginning of the destruction of our life. Our people are suffering and no one cares. If you talk to our people, they (are) all suffering. No one is smiling. But there's no preoccupation with this from the leadership (of the party).”

From my recollection of the conversations which Victoria Brittain had with these leaders of the MPLA, Paolo Jorge and Lucio Lara, at the end of these interactions they made an admission that is immensely painful for all genuine revolutionaries, such as Oliver Tambo was.

They said that when the MPLA formally allowed all its leaders to engage in business for personal benefit, and thus to enrich themselves, turning their back on the defining obligation of the leaders of the revolution to ‘solve the people’s problems’, this marked the moment of ***the death of dignity*** of both the party of the democratic revolution and the revolution itself.

As a people that has, for an entire Century, placed our most sacred hopes about our better future in our own parliament of the people, the ANC, we must ask ourselves and answer a vitally important question, precisely during this year of the Centenary of that parliament of the people, whether this historic creation of all the peoples of Africa and the African Diaspora is, today, what it should be!

If Oliver Tambo was alive today, I have absolutely no doubt that he would surely have been gravely concerned that we do not conduct ourselves in a manner that would result in our own *death of dignity*.

Despite the accident of his place of birth in what was already then and now the grossly disadvantaged African rural Eastern Cape of South Africa, the Transkei, Oliver Tambo developed into a renaissance intellectual, eminently competent in many fields, including mathematics, biology and chemistry, legal jurisprudence, history, pedagogy and theology, military science, sociology and revolutionary social transformation, communications, creative literature, music and the arts.

To express my profound respect for him and his many talents, and with your permission, I will end by citing what the creative writers of two Continents have said in the past, which I trust will help to explain the grave challenges we face.

Some centuries ago, in his famous play, *Hamlet*, the eminent English playwright, William Shakespeare, reflecting on similarly troubled times in his imagined State of Denmark, got the hero of the play, *Hamlet*, to utter the challenging words full of pathos:

*The time is out of joint -
O cursèd spite
That ever I was born to set it right!*

I dare say that **the time during which we live is out of joint.**

The challenge each one of us faces is whether we have the courage to set it right!

Centuries after Shakespeare lived and composed his Plays, early in the 20th Century, the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, foresaw an epoch when the time would be out of joint for all humanity.

In his famous poem, *The Second Coming*, he wrote:

*The darkness drops again but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle.
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

During the same Century, the last, our own undeclared national Poet Laureate, S.E.K. Mqhayi, foresaw similar times for our country and wrote the disturbing words, in one of our own languages:

*“Kunamhla nj’ ilizwe liyazuza;
Kunamhla nje lo mhlab’ uyalunywa;
Int’ esesiswini maze niyilumkele,
Loo nt’ isesizalweni maze niyindwebele;
Namhla ngathi kuza kuzalw’ uGilikankqo,
Ngathi kuzalw’ isil’ esingaziwa mngxuma.”*

Surely our own consciousness and consciences as revolutionary democrats must tell us that we would honour Oliver Tambo best, not by finding flattering and casual words to speak well of him, but by responding correctly to a time that is out of joint, by confronting the beast that is slouching out of Bethlehem to be born, by contending with *isil’ esingaziwa mngxuma* – the frightening beast of the wild, of no known abode and origin!

I can think of no better response to these historic challenges, to guarantee our victory over human deprivation and the dehumanisation of the African, than to

do what we must, to emulate the example that Oliver Tambo set, which helped to define what the ANC must be.

Thank you for your attention.

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