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LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

The Autobiography of

**NELSON
MANDELA**



Little, Brown and Company

New York Boston

out a window but was cut off by a snarling police dog. The arrests also included Arthur Goldreich, who had driven into the farm as the police raid was in progress.

The police searched the entire farm and confiscated hundreds of documents and papers, though they found no weapons. One of the most important documents remained right on the table: Operation Mayibuye, a plan for guerrilla warfare in South Africa. In one fell swoop, the police had captured the entire High Command of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Everyone was detained under the new Ninety-Day Detention Law.

Joe Slovo and Bram Fischer were fortunately not there at the time of the raid. But Joe and Bram often went to the farm two or three times a day. In hindsight, it is extraordinary that Liliesleaf was not discovered sooner. The regime had become stricter and more sophisticated. Wiretaps had become common, as was twenty-four-hour surveillance. The raid was a coup for the state.

On our first day in court we were not given the opportunity to instruct counsel. We were brought before a magistrate and charged with sabotage. A few days later we were allowed to meet with Bram, Vernon Berrangé, Joel Joffe, George Bizos, and Arthur Chaskalson, all of whom were acting for us. I was still being kept separately as I was a convicted prisoner, and these sessions were my first opportunity to talk with my colleagues.

Bram was very somber. In his quiet voice, he told us that we were facing an extremely serious trial and that the state had formally advised him they would ask for the supreme penalty permitted by law, the death sentence. Given the climate of the times, Bram said, this result was a very real possibility. From that moment on we lived in the shadow of the gallows. The mere possibility of a death sentence changes everything. From the start, we considered it the most likely outcome of the trial. Far lesser crimes than ours had recently been punished by life sentences.

Prison officials never let you forget that you might hang. That night, a warder rapped on my cell door at bedtime. "Mandela, you don't have to worry about sleep," he said. "You are going to sleep for a long, long time." I waited a moment and said, "All of us, you included, are going to sleep for a long, long time." It was small consolation.

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ON OCTOBER 9, 1963, we were picked up in a heavily fortified motor van. It had a steel divider running along the center, segregating the white prisoners from the Africans. We were driven to the Palace of Justice in Pretoria, where the Supreme Court sits, for the opening of *The State versus the National High Command and Others*, what later became known as *The State versus Nelson Mandela and Others*, and is still better known as the Rivonia Trial. Near the front stands a statue of Paul Kruger, the president of the Republic of the Transvaal who fought against British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Underneath this Afrikaner hero is a quotation from one of his speeches. The inscription reads, "In confidence we lay our cause before the whole world. Whether we win or whether we lose, freedom will rise in Africa like the sun from the morning clouds." Our van was in the center of a convoy of police trucks. At the front of this motorcade were limousines carrying high police officials. The Palace of Justice was teeming with armed policemen. To avoid the enormous crowd of our supporters, who had grouped in front of the building, we were driven into the rear of the building and driven through great iron gates. All around the building police officers with machine guns stood at attention. As we descended from the van, we could hear the great crowd singing and chanting. Once inside, we were held in cells below the courtroom before the opening of what was depicted in the newspapers at home and around the world as the most significant political trial in the history of South Africa.

As we emerged from the cells, each of the accused was accompanied by two armed warders. When we entered the ornate, high-ceilinged courtroom, we each turned to the crowd and made a clenched-fist salute. In the visitors' gallery our supporters shouted "*Amandla! Amandla!*" and "*Mayibuye Afrika!*" This was inspiring, but dangerous: the police took the names and addresses of all the spectators in the galleries, and photographed them as they left the court. The courtroom was filled with domestic and international journalists, and dozens of representatives of foreign governments.

After we filed in, a group of police officers formed a tight cordon between us and the spectators. I was disgusted to have to appear in court wearing my prison clothes of khaki shorts and flimsy sandals. As a convicted prisoner, I did not have the choice of wearing proper clothes. Many people later commented on how poorly I looked, and not just because of my wardrobe. I had been in and out of solitary confinement for months and I had lost more than twenty-five pounds. I took pains to smile at the gallery when I walked into the courtroom, and seeing our supporters was the best medicine I could have had.

Security was particularly tight as only a few weeks before Arthur Goldreich, Harold Wolpe, Mosie Moola, and Abdulhay Jassat had bribed a young guard and escaped from jail. Arthur and Harold made their way to Swaziland disguised as priests, then flew to Tanganyika. Their escape came at a time of hysteria about the underground and was greeted with blaring newspaper headlines. It was an embarrassment to the government and a boost to our morale.

Our judge in the Rivonia Trial was Mr. Quartus de Wet, judge-president of the Transvaal, who sat in his flowing red robes beneath a wooden canopy. De Wet was one of the last judges appointed by the United Party before the Nationalists came to power and was not considered a government lackey. He was a poker-faced judge who did not suffer fools gladly. The prosecutor was Dr. Percy Yutar, deputy attorney general of the Transvaal, whose ambition was to become attorney general of South Africa. He was a small, bald, dapper fellow, whose voice squeaked when he became angry or emotional. He had a flair for the dramatic and for high-flown if imprecise language.

Yutar rose and addressed the court: "My Lord, I call the case of the state against the National High Command and others." I was accused number one. Yutar handed in the indictment and authorized that we be charged immediately and tried summarily. This was the first time we were given a copy of the indictment. The prosecution had kept it from us, though they gave it to the *Rand Daily Mail*, which had splashed it all over that day's edition of the paper. The indictment charged eleven of us with complicity in over two hundred acts of sabotage aimed at facilitating violent revolution and an armed invasion of the country. The state contended that we were actors in a conspiracy to overthrow the government.

We were charged with sabotage and conspiracy rather than high treason because the law does not require a long preparatory examination (which is highly useful to the defense) for sabotage and conspiracy as it does for treason. Yet the supreme penalty — death by hanging — is the same. With high treason, the state must prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt and needs two witnesses to testify to each charge. Under the Sabotage Law, the onus was on the defense to prove the accused innocent.

Bram Fischer stood up and asked the court for a remand on the grounds that the defense had not had time to prepare its case. He noted that a number of the accused had been held in solitary confinement for unconscionable lengths of time. The state had been preparing for three months, but we had only received the indictment that day. Justice de Wet gave us a three-week adjournment until October 29.

I was disturbed to discover that first day that Winnie was unable to attend. Because of her banning and her restriction to Johannesburg, she needed police permission to come to court. She had applied and been refused. I also learned that our house had been raided and the police had detained a young relative of Winnie's. Winnie was not the only wife being harassed. Albertina Sisulu and Caroline Motsoaledi were detained under the Ninety-Day Detention Act, and Walter's young son Max was also arrested. This was one of the state's most barbarous techniques of applying pressure: imprisoning the wives and children of freedom fighters. Many men in prison were able to handle anything the authorities did to them, but the thought of the state doing the same thing to their families was almost impossible to bear.

Winnie subsequently appealed to the minister of justice, who granted her permission to attend the trial on the condition that she did not wear traditional dress. Ironically, the same government that was telling us to embrace our culture in the homelands forbade Winnie from wearing a Xhosa gown into court.

During the next three weeks, we were permitted to spend our days together preparing our case. I was now among my fellow accused, and the company of my colleagues was a tonic. As awaiting-trial prisoners we were entitled to two half-hour visits a week, and one

meal a day could be sent in from the outside. I soon gained back my lost weight with Mrs. Pillay's delicious dinners.

While we were preparing our defense, the government was trying the case in the newspapers. Normally, a case that is sub judice cannot be commented upon in public or in the press. But since the men arrested at Rivonia were Ninety-Day detainees, and therefore not technically charged with a crime, this judicial principle went by the wayside. We were publicly branded as violent revolutionaries by everyone from the minister of justice on down. Newspapers regularly featured headlines like "REVOLUTION ON MILITARY BASIS."

On October 29, we again entered the Palace of Justice; again the crowds were large and excited; again the security was extremely tight; again the court was filled with dignitaries from many foreign embassies. After three weeks with my comrades I felt rejuvenated, and I was far more comfortable in court this time in a suit. Our attorneys had objected to our having to come to court in prison garb and we had won the right to wear our own clothes. We again raised clenched fists to the gallery, and were warned that if we did it again, we would be forced to come to court in our prison khakis. To prevent such outbursts, the authorities reversed the normal order of the prisoners preceding the judge into the courtroom. After that first day, the judge entered first so that court would already be in session when we entered.

We went on the attack immediately — Bram Fischer criticized the state's indictment as shoddy, poorly drawn, and containing absurdities such as the allegation that I had participated in certain acts of sabotage on dates when I was in Pretoria Local. Yutar was flummoxed. Judge de Wet looked to him to reply to Bram's argument, and instead of offering particulars he began to give what the judge derided as "a political speech." De Wet was impatient with Yutar's fumbling and told him so. "The whole basis of your argument as I understand it, Mr. Yutar, is that you are satisfied that the accused are guilty." De Wet then quashed the indictment and gavelled the session to a close.

For that moment we were technically free, and there was pandemonium in the court. But we were rearrested even before Judge de Wet left his seat. Lieutenant Swanepoel clapped each of us on the shoulder and said, "I am arresting you on a charge of sabotage," and we were herded back to our cells. Even so, this was a blow to

the government, for they now had to go back to the drawing board in the case they were calling the trial to end all trials.

The state redrew their indictment and we were back in court in early December. We all sensed that in the interim Justice de Wet had grown more hostile to us. We suspected his previous independence had brought down the wrath of the government and pressure had been applied. The new charges were read: we were alleged to have recruited persons for sabotage and guerrilla warfare for the purpose of starting a violent revolution; we had allegedly conspired to aid foreign military units to invade the republic in order to support a Communist revolution; and we had solicited and received funds from foreign countries for this purpose. The orders for munitions on the part of the accused, said Yutar melodramatically, were enough to blow up Johannesburg.

The registrar then requested our pleas. We had agreed not to plead in the traditional manner but to use the moment to show our disdain for the proceedings.

"Accused number one, Nelson Mandela, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

I rose and said, "My Lord, it is not I, but the government that should be in the dock. I plead not guilty."

"Accused number two, Walter Sisulu, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

Sisulu: "The government is responsible for what has happened in this country. I plead not guilty."

Justice de Wet said he was not interested in hearing political speeches, that we should merely plead not guilty or guilty. But his direction was ignored. Each of the accused suggested that it was the government that was criminal before pleading not guilty.

To enhance the drama of the proceedings, the state had made arrangements for a live broadcast of Yutar's speech on the South African Broadcasting System. Microphones had been placed on the prosecution table as well as in front of the judge. But just as Yutar was clearing his throat, Bram Fischer rose and made an application to the court for the removal of the microphones on the grounds that the broadcasts would unfairly prejudice the case and were not in keeping with the dignity of the court. Despite Yutar's shrill plea for their retention, Justice de Wet ordered them removed.

In his address, Yutar argued that from the time the ANC had been driven underground, the organization had embarked on a policy of violence designed to lead from sabotage through guerrilla warfare to an armed invasion of the country. He asserted that we planned to deploy thousands of trained guerrilla units throughout the country, and these units were to spearhead an uprising that would be followed by an armed invasion by military units of a foreign power. "In the midst of the resulting chaos, turmoil, and disorder," Yutar proclaimed, "it was planned by the accused to set up a Provisional Revolutionary Government to take over the administration and control of the country." The engine of this grand plan was Umkhonto we Sizwe, under the political direction of the ANC and the Communist Party, and the headquarters of Umkhonto was Rivonia.

In his orotund prose, Yutar described how we recruited members for MK, how we planned our national uprising for 1963 (here he was confusing us with the PAC), how we erected a powerful radio transmitter at Rivonia, and how we were collectively responsible for two hundred twenty-two acts of sabotage. He said Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni were in charge of recruiting members and that Dennis Goldberg ran a special school for recruits in the Cape. He detailed the production of various bombs, as well as the solicitation of money abroad.

Over the next three months, the state produced one hundred seventy-three witnesses and entered into the record thousands of documents and photographs, including standard works on Marxism, histories of guerrilla warfare, maps, blueprints, and a passport made out to one David Motsamayi. The first witness was a police photographer who had taken pictures of Rivonia, and the next witnesses were domestic workers for the Goldreich family, who had been held in detention all this time even though they had no connection to the politics of the household. These servants identified most of us by pointing to us in the dock, but old Mr. Jelliman, in a brave attempt to help me, pretended that he did not see me when he was asked to point to accused number one. Look again, the prosecutor said, go over all the faces carefully. "I do not think he is here," Jelliman said quietly.

We wondered what evidence the state had to prove my guilt. I had been out of the country and in prison while much of the planning

at Rivonia had taken place. When I saw Walter in Pretoria Local just after my sentencing, I urged him to make sure that all my books and notes were removed from the farm. But during the first week of the trial, when Rusty Bernstein applied for bail, Percy Yutar dramatically produced the sketch of the Fort and the accompanying note about escape that I had made while detained there. Yutar exclaimed that this was evidence that all of the accused meant to escape. It was a sign that nothing of mine had been removed from Rivonia. Later, I was told that my colleagues at Rivonia had decided to preserve my escape note because they thought it would be historic in the future. But in the present, it cost Rusty Bernstein his bail.

The state's star witness was Bruno Mtolo, or "Mr. X" as he was known in court. In introducing "Mr. X," Yutar informed the court that the interrogation would take three days and then, in theatrical tones, he added that the witness was "in mortal danger." Yutar asked that the evidence be given in camera, but that the press be included provided that they not identify the witness.

Mtolo was a tall, well-built man with an excellent memory. A Zulu from Durban, he had become the leader of the Natal region of MK. He was an experienced saboteur, and had been to Rivonia. I had met him only once, when I addressed his group of MK cadres in Natal after my return from the continent. His evidence concerning me in particular made me realize that the state would certainly be able to convict me.

He began by saying that he was an MK saboteur who had blown up a municipal office, a power pylon, and an electricity line. With impressive precision, he explained the operation of bombs, land mines, and grenades, and how MK worked from underground. Mtolo said that while he had never lost faith in the ideals of the ANC, he did lose faith in the organization when he realized that it and MK were instruments of the Communist Party.

His testimony was given with simplicity and what seemed like candor, but Mtolo had gone out of his way to embellish his evidence. This was undoubtedly done on police instructions. He told the court that during my remarks to the Natal Regional Command I had stated that all MK cadres ought to be good Communists but not to disclose their views publicly. In fact, I never said anything of the sort, but his testimony was meant to link me and MK to the Communist Party. His memory appeared so precise the ordinary person

would assume that it was accurate in all instances. But this was not so.

I was bewildered by Mtolo's betrayal. I never ruled out the possibility of even senior ANC men breaking down under police torture. But by all accounts, Mtolo was never touched. On the stand, he went out of his way to implicate people who were not even mentioned in the case. It is possible, I know, to have a change of heart, but to betray so many others, many of whom were quite innocent, seemed to me inexcusable.

During cross-examination we learned that Mtolo had been a petty criminal before joining MK and had been imprisoned three previous times for theft. But despite these revelations, he was an extremely damaging witness, for the judge found him reliable and believable, and his testimony incriminated nearly all of us.

The keystone of the state's case was the six-page Plan of Action confiscated in the Rivonia raid. The leaders of the High Command had had this very document before them on the table when the police stormed the farm. Operation Mayibuye sketches out in general form the plan for the possible commencement of guerrilla operations, and how it might spark a mass armed uprising against the government. It envisions an initial landing of small guerrilla forces in four different areas of South Africa and the attacking of preselected targets. The document set a goal of seven thousand MK recruits in the country who would meet the initial outside force of one hundred twenty trained guerrillas.

The prosecution's case rested in large part on their contention that Operation Mayibuye had been approved by the ANC executive and had become the operating plan of MK. We insisted that Operation Mayibuye had not yet been formally adopted and was still under discussion at the time of the arrests. As far as I was concerned, Operation Mayibuye was a draft document that was not only not approved, but was entirely unrealistic in its goals and plans. I did not believe that guerrilla warfare was a viable option at that stage.

The plan had been drafted in my absence so I had very little knowledge of it. Even among the Rivonia Trialists there was disagreement as to whether the plan had been adopted as ANC policy. Govan, who had drafted the document with Joe Slovo, insisted that it had been agreed upon and felt that it was wrong for us to argue in court that it was still under discussion. But all the other accused

contended that the document, while drawn up by the High Command, had not been approved by the ANC executive or even seen by Chief Luthuli.

Although a capital trial can be quite grim, our spirits were generally high. There was a good deal of gallows humor among us. Dennis Goldberg, the youngest of the accused, had an irrepressible sense of humor and often had us laughing when we should not have been. When one of the prosecution witnesses described how Raymond Mhlaba had worn a clerical collar as a disguise, Dennis took to calling him Reverend Mhlaba.

In our consulting room downstairs, we often communicated through notes, which we would then burn and throw in the wastebasket. One of the Special Branch officers who looked after us was Lieutenant Swanepoel, a burly, red-faced fellow who was convinced we were always putting one over on him. One day, while Swanepoel was observing us from the door, Govan Mbeki began to write a note in a conspicuously secretive manner. With similar drama he handed me the note. I read it, nodded my head sagely, and passed it to Kathy, who ostentatiously took out his matches as if to burn the note when Swanepoel swooped into the room, grabbed the paper out of Kathy's hands, and said something about the dangers of lighting matches indoors. He then left the room to read his prize; a few seconds later, he stormed back saying, "I will get all of you for this!" Govan had written in capital letters: "ISN'T SWANEPOEL A FINE-LOOKING CHAP?"

We were locked up in prison and on trial for our lives, but outside new life was blossoming. Jimmy Kantor's wife was to give birth any day. Jimmy was an attorney who had been roped into the trial by the state for no other reason than that he was Harold Wolpe's brother-in-law.

One morning, when we were sitting in the dock, a note was passed down to me from the other end.

Barbara and I have discussed godfathers at length and we have come to the conclusion that, whether the baby is a girl or boy, we would consider it an honour if you would agree to accept this office as an adjunct to the more disreputable positions you have held in the past.

By return mail I sent Jimmy back a note.

I would be more than delighted, and the honour is mine, not the baby's.
Now they dare not hang me.

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THE STATE CASE continued through the Christmas season of 1963, ending on February 29, 1964. We had a little over a month to examine the evidence and prepare our defense. We were not all equally affected by the evidence. There was no evidence against James Kantor; he was not even a member of our organization and should not have been on trial at all. For Rusty Bernstein, Raymond Mhlaba, and Ahmed Kathrada, the evidence of involvement in conspiracy was slight and we decided they should not incriminate themselves. In Rusty's case, the evidence was negligible; he had merely been found at Rivonia with the others. The remaining six of us would make admissions of guilt on certain charges.

Bram was deeply pessimistic. He avowed that even if we proved that guerrilla war had not been approved and our policy of sabotage was designed not to sacrifice human life, the state could still impose the death sentence. The defense team was divided on whether or not we should testify. Some asserted that it would hurt our case if we testified. George Bizos, though, suggested that unless we gave evidence and convinced the judge that we had not decided on guerrilla warfare, he would certainly impose the supreme penalty.

Right from the start we had made it clear that we intended to use the trial not as a test of the law but as a platform for our beliefs. We would not deny, for example, that we had been responsible for acts of sabotage. We would not deny that a group of us had turned away from nonviolence. We were not concerned with getting off or lessening our punishment, but with having the trial strengthen the cause for which we were all struggling — at whatever cost to ourselves. We would not defend ourselves in a legal sense so much as in a moral sense. We saw the trial as a continuation of the struggle by other means. We would readily admit what was known by the state to be true but refuse to give away any information we thought might implicate others.

We would dispute the state's central contention that we had embarked on guerrilla warfare. We would admit that we had made

contingency plans to undertake guerrilla warfare in the event sabotage failed. But we would claim it had not yet failed, for it had not been sufficiently attempted. We would deny the claims of murder and damage to innocent bystanders that the state alleged; either these claims were outright lies, or the incidents were the work of someone else. We had never contemplated the intervention of foreign military forces. In order to make these claims, we believed we would have to explain Operation Mayibuye to the court.

In my own case, the court had sufficient evidence for a conviction. Documents in my handwriting showed that I had left the country illegally, had arranged for military training for our men, and had been behind the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe. There was also a document in my handwriting called "How to be a good Communist," which the state suggested was proof that I was a card-carrying Communist. In fact the document's title was taken from the work of a Chinese theoretician named Liu Shao Chi, and was written by me to prove a point to Moses Kotane. We had been engaged in a running debate about the appeal of communism to ordinary South Africans. I had long argued that Communist literature was, for the most part, dull, esoteric, and Western-centered, but ought to be simple, clear, and relevant to the African masses. Moses insisted it could not be done. To prove my point, I had taken Liu's essay and rewritten it for an African audience.

I would be the first witness and therefore set the tone for the defense. In South African courts, evidence from the witness box can be given only in the form of an answer to a question. I did not want to be limited to that format. We decided that instead of giving testimony, I would read a statement from the dock, while the others would testify and go through cross-examination.

Because a witness making a statement from the dock does not submit to cross-examination or questions from the bench, the statement does not have the same legal weight as ordinary testimony. Those who choose to make such a statement usually do so to avoid cross-examination. Our attorneys warned me that it would put me in a more precarious legal situation; anything I said in my statement regarding my own innocence would be discounted by the judge. But that was not our highest priority. We believed it was important to open the defense with a statement of our politics and ideals,

which would establish the context for all that followed. I wanted very much to cross swords with Percy Yutar, but it was more important that I use the platform to highlight our grievances.

All of this was agreed upon in consultation, mainly through notes because the consultation room was bugged. We even used the state's eavesdropping to our advantage by supplying them with disinformation. We gave every indication that I was going to testify so that they would spend their time planning their cross-examination. In a staged conversation, I told our attorney Joel Joffe that I would need the Treason Trial record to prepare my testimony. We smiled at the notion of Yutar poring over the hundred or so volumes of Treason Trial transcripts.

I spent about a fortnight drafting my address, working mainly in my cell in the evenings. When I was finished, I read it first to my comrades and fellow accused. They approved of it, suggesting a few changes, and then I asked Bram Fischer to look it over. Bram became concerned after reading it and had a respected advocate named Hal Hanson read it. Hanson told Bram, "If Mandela reads this in court they will take him straight out in back of the courthouse and string him up." That confirmed Bram's anxieties and he came to me the next day and urged me to modify the speech. I felt we were likely to hang no matter what we said, so we might as well say what we truly believed. The atmosphere at the time was extremely grim, with newspapers routinely speculating that we would receive the death sentence. Bram begged me not to read the final paragraph, but I was adamant.

On Monday, the twentieth of April, under the tightest of security, we were taken to the Palace of Justice, this time to begin our defense. Winnie was there with my mother, and I nodded to them as we entered the court, which was again full.

Bram announced that certain parts of the state's evidence would be conceded by the accused, and there was a buzz in the court. But he went on to say that the defense would deny a number of the state's assertions, including the contention that Umkhonto we Sizwe was the military wing of the ANC. He said that the leaders of MK and the ANC "endeavored to keep these two organizations entirely separate. They did not always succeed in this," he said, "but . . . every

effort was made to achieve that object." He emphatically denied that the ANC took orders from the Communist Party. He said the defense would challenge the allegation that Goldberg, Kathrada, Bernstein, and Mhlaba were members of Umkhonto. He stated that the defense would show that Umkhonto had not in fact adopted Operation Mayibuye, and that MK had not embarked on preparations for guerrilla warfare.

"That will be denied?" asked Justice de Wet incredulously.

"That will be denied," replied Bram. "The evidence will show that while preparations for guerrilla warfare were being made, no plan was ever adopted. It was hoped throughout that such a step could be avoided."

Then, in his soft voice, Bram said, "The defense case, My Lord, will commence with a statement from the dock by accused number one, who personally took part in the establishment of Umkhonto, and who will be able to inform the court of the beginnings of that organization."

At this, Yutar popped up from the table and cried, "My Lord! My Lord!" He was distressed that I would not be testifying for he had undoubtedly prepared for my cross-examination. "My Lord," he said rather despondently, "a statement from the dock does not carry the same weight as evidence under oath."

"I think, Dr. Yutar," Justice de Wet responded dryly, "that counsel for the defense have sufficient experience to advise their clients without your assistance." Yutar sat down.

"Neither we nor our clients are unaware of the provisions of the criminal code," replied Bram. "I call on Nelson Mandela."

I rose and faced the courtroom and read slowly.

I am the first accused.

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Arts, and practiced as an attorney in Johannesburg for a number of years in partnership with Mr. Oliver Tambo. I am a convicted prisoner, serving five years for leaving the country without a permit and for inciting people to go on strike at the end of May 1961.

I admit immediately that I was one of the persons who helped to form Umkhonto we Sizwe and that I played a prominent role in its affairs until I was arrested in August 1962.

At the outset, I want to say that the suggestion made by the state in its opening that the struggle in South Africa is under the influence of

foreigners or Communists is wholly incorrect. I have done whatever I did, both as an individual and as a leader of my people, because of my experience in South Africa, and my own proudly felt African background, and not because of what any outsider might have said.

In my youth in the Transkei, I listened to the elders of my tribe telling stories of the old days. Amongst the tales they related to me were those of wars fought by our ancestors in defense of the fatherland. The names of Dingane and Bambatha, Hintsu and Makanna, Squngthi and Dalasile, Moshoeshoe and Sekhukhuni, were praised as the pride and glory of the entire African nation. I hoped then that life might offer me the opportunity to serve my people and make my own humble contribution to their freedom struggle. This is what has motivated me in all that I have done in relation to the charges made against me in this case.

Having said this, I must deal immediately and at some length with the question of violence. Some of the things so far told the court are true and some are untrue. I do not, however, deny that I planned sabotage. I did not plan it in a spirit of recklessness nor because I have any love of violence. I planned it as a result of a calm and sober assessment of the political situation that had arisen after many years of tyranny, exploitation, and oppression of my people by whites.

I wanted to impress upon the court that we had not acted irresponsibly or without thought to the ramifications of taking up violent action. I laid particular emphasis on our resolve to cause no harm to human life.

We of the ANC have always stood for a nonracial democracy, and we shrank from any action which might drive the races further apart than they already were. But the hard facts were that fifty years of nonviolence had brought the African people nothing but more repressive legislation, and fewer and fewer rights. It may not be easy for this court to understand, but it is a fact that for a long time the people had been talking of violence — of the day when they would fight the white man and win back their country, and we, the leaders of the ANC, had nevertheless always prevailed upon them to avoid violence and to use peaceful methods. While some of us discussed this in May and June of 1961, it could not be denied that our policy to achieve a nonracial state by nonviolence had achieved nothing, and that our followers were beginning to lose confidence in this policy and were developing disturbing ideas of terrorism. . . .

Umkhonto was formed in November 1961. When we took this decision, and subsequently formulated our plans, the ANC heritage of nonviolence and racial harmony was very much with us. We felt that the

country was drifting towards a civil war in which blacks and whites would fight each other. We viewed the situation with alarm. Civil war would mean the destruction of what the ANC stood for; with civil war racial peace would be more difficult than ever to achieve. We already have examples in South African history of the results of war. It has taken more than fifty years for the scars of the South African [Anglo-Boer] War to disappear. How much longer would it take to eradicate the scars of interracial civil war, which could not be fought without a great loss of life on both sides?

Sabotage, I said, offered the best hope for future race relations. The reaction of the white rulers to our first efforts was swift and brutal: sabotage was declared to be a crime punishable by death. We did not want civil war, I said, but we needed to be prepared for it.

Experience convinced us that rebellion would offer the government limitless opportunities for the indiscriminate slaughter of our people. But it was precisely because the soil of South Africa is already drenched with the blood of innocent Africans that we felt it our duty to make preparations as a long-term undertaking to use force in order to defend ourselves against force. If war were inevitable, we wanted the fight to be conducted on terms most favorable to our people. The fight which held out prospects best for us and the least risk of life to both sides was guerrilla warfare. We decided, therefore, in our preparations for the future, to make provision for the possibility of guerrilla warfare.

All whites undergo compulsory military training, but no such training was given to Africans. It was in our view essential to build up a nucleus of trained men who would be able to provide the leadership which would be required if guerrilla warfare started. We had to prepare for such a situation before it became too late to make proper preparations.

I explained that at this stage in our discussions I left the country to attend the PAFMECSA conference and undergo military training. I said that I underwent training because if there was to be a guerrilla war, I wanted to be able to stand and fight beside my own people. Even so, I believed that the possibilities of sabotage were far from exhausted and should be pursued with vigor.

I told the court of the dividing line between the ANC and MK, and how we made good-faith attempts to keep the two separate. This was our policy, but in practice, it was not so simple. Because of bannings and imprisonment, people often had to work in both

organizations. Though this might have sometimes blurred the distinction, it did not abolish it. I disputed the allegations of the state that the aims and objects of the ANC and the Communist Party were one and the same.

The ideological creed of the ANC is, and always has been, the creed of African Nationalism. It is not the concept of African Nationalism expressed in the cry, "Drive the white man into the sea." The African Nationalism for which the ANC stands is the concept of freedom and fulfillment for the African people in their own land. The most important political document ever adopted by the ANC is the Freedom Charter. It is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state. . . . The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society. . . .

The ANC, unlike the Communist Party, admitted Africans only as members. Its chief goal was, and is, for the African people to win unity and full political rights. The Communist Party's main aim, on the other hand, was to remove the capitalists and to replace them with a working-class government. The Communist Party sought to emphasize class distinctions whilst the ANC seeks to harmonize them.

It is true that there has often been close cooperation between the ANC and the Communist Party. But cooperation is merely proof of a common goal — in this case the removal of white supremacy — and is not proof of a complete community of interests. The history of the world is full of similar examples. Perhaps the most striking illustration is to be found in the cooperation between Great Britain, the United States of America and the Soviet Union in the fight against Hitler. Nobody but Hitler would have dared to suggest that such cooperation turned Churchill or Roosevelt into Communists or Communist tools, or that Britain and America were working to bring about a Communist world. . . .

It is perhaps difficult for white South Africans, with an ingrained prejudice against communism, to understand why experienced African politicians so readily accepted Communists as their friends. But to us the reason is obvious. Theoretical differences amongst those fighting against oppression is a luxury we cannot afford at this stage. What is more, for many decades Communists were the only political group in South Africa who were prepared to treat Africans as human beings and their equals; who were prepared to eat with us; talk with us, live with and work with us. Because of this, there are many Africans who, today, tend to equate freedom with communism.

I told the court that I was not a Communist and had always regarded myself as an African patriot. I did not deny that I was attracted by the idea of a classless society, or that I had been influenced by Marxist thought. This was true of many leaders of the newly independent states of Africa, who accepted the need for some form of socialism to enable their people to catch up with the advanced countries of the West.

From my reading of Marxist literature and from conversations with Marxists, I have gained the impression that Communists regard the parliamentary system of the West as undemocratic and reactionary. But, on the contrary, I am an admirer of such a system.

The Magna Carta, the Petition of Rights and the Bill of Rights, are documents which are held in veneration by democrats throughout the world. I have great respect for British political institutions, and for the country's system of justice. I regard the British Parliament as the most democratic institution in the world, and the independence and impartiality of its judiciary never fail to arouse my admiration. The American Congress, the country's doctrine of separation of powers, as well as the independence of its judiciary, arouse in me similar sentiments.

I detailed the terrible disparities between black and white life in South Africa. In education, health, income, every aspect of life, blacks were barely at a subsistence level while whites had the highest standards in the world — and aimed to keep it that way. Whites, I said, often claim that Africans in South Africa were better off than Africans in the rest of the continent. Our complaint, I said, was not that we were poor by comparison with the people in the rest of Africa, but that we were poor by comparison with the whites in our country, and that we were prevented by legislation from righting that imbalance.

The lack of human dignity experienced by Africans is the direct result of the policy of white supremacy. White supremacy implies black inferiority. Legislation designed to preserve white supremacy entrenches this notion. Menial tasks in South Africa are invariably performed by Africans. When anything has to be carried or cleaned the white man looks around for an African to do it for him, whether the African is employed by him or not. . . .

Poverty and the breakdown of family life have secondary effects. Children wander about the streets of the townships because they have

no schools to go to, or no money to enable them to go to school, or no parents at home to see that they go to school, because both parents (if there be two) have to work to keep the family alive. This leads to a breakdown in moral standards, to an alarming rise in illegitimacy and to growing violence which erupts, not only politically, but everywhere. . . .

Africans want a just share in the whole of South Africa; they want security and a stake in society. Above all, we want equal political rights, because without them our disabilities will be permanent. I know this sounds revolutionary to the whites in this country, because the majority of voters will be Africans. This makes the white man fear democracy. . . .

This then is what the ANC is fighting for. Their struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by their own suffering and their own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live.

I had been reading my speech, and at this point I placed my papers on the defense table, and turned to face the judge. The courtroom became extremely quiet. I did not take my eyes off Justice de Wet as I spoke from memory the final words.

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

The silence in the courtroom was now complete. At the end of the address, I simply sat down. I did not turn and face the gallery, though I felt all their eyes on me. The silence seemed to stretch for many minutes. But in fact it lasted probably no more than thirty seconds, and then from the gallery I heard what sounded like a great sigh, a deep, collective "ummmm," followed by the cries of women.

I had read for over four hours. It was a little after four in the afternoon, the time court normally adjourned. But Justice de Wet, as soon as there was order in the courtroom, asked for the next witness. He was determined to lessen the impact of my statement. He did not want it to be the last and only testimony of the day. But nothing he did could weaken its effect. When I finished my address and sat down, it was the last time that Justice de Wet ever looked me in the eye.

The speech received wide publicity in both the local and foreign

press, and was printed, virtually word for word, in the *Rand Daily Mail*. This despite the fact that all my words were banned. The speech both indicated our line of defense and disarmed the prosecution, which had prepared its entire case based on the expectation that I would be giving evidence denying responsibility for sabotage. It was now plain that we would not attempt to use legal niceties to avoid accepting responsibility for actions we had taken with pride and premeditation.

Accused number two, Walter Sisulu, was next. Walter had to bear the brunt of the cross-examination that Yutar had prepared for me. Walter withstood a barrage of hostile questions and rose above Yutar's petty machinations to explain our policy in clear and simple terms. He asserted that Operation Mayibuye and the policy of guerrilla warfare had not been adopted as ANC policy. In fact, Walter told the court that he had personally opposed its adoption on the grounds that it was premature.

Govan followed Walter in the witness box and proudly related to the court his longtime membership in the Communist Party. The prosecutor asked Govan why, if he admitted many of the actions in the four counts against him, he did not simply plead guilty to the four counts? "First," Govan said, "I felt I should come and explain under oath some of the reasons that led me to join these organizations. There was a sense of moral duty attached to it. Secondly, for the simple reason that to plead guilty would to my mind indicate a sense of moral guilt. I do not accept there is moral guilt attached to my answers."

Like Govan, Ahmed Kathrada and Rusty Bernstein testified to their membership of the Communist Party as well as the ANC. Although Rusty was captured at Rivonia during the raid, the only evidence of a direct nature that the state had against him was that he had assisted in the erection of a radio aerial at the farm. Kathy, in his sharp-witted testimony, denied committing acts of sabotage or inciting others to do so, but he said he supported such acts if they advanced the struggle.

We had all been surprised when accused number eight, James Kantor, had been arrested and grouped with us. Apart from being the brother-in-law and legal partner of Harold Wolpe, who

performed a number of transactions for us through his office, he had no involvement whatsoever with the ANC or MK. There was virtually no evidence against him, and I assumed the only reason the state kept up the charade of prosecuting him in prison was to intimidate progressive lawyers.

On the day that Justice de Wet was to rule on Jimmy's case, we were waiting in the cells underneath the court and I said to Jimmy, "Let us exchange ties for good luck." But when he saw the wide, old-fashioned tie I gave him compared to the lovely, silk tie he gave me, he probably thought I was merely trying to improve my wardrobe. Jimmy was something of a clotheshorse, but he wore the tie to court and when Justice de Wet dismissed the charges against him, he lifted the tie up to me as a kind of salute and farewell.

Raymond Mhlaba was one of the leading ANC and MK figures in the eastern Cape, but because the state did not have much evidence against him, he denied he was a member of MK and that he knew anything about sabotage. We all decided that neither Elias Motsoaledi, accused number nine, nor Andrew Mlangeni, accused number ten, should testify. They were low-level members of MK, and could not add much to what had already been said. Elias Motsoaledi, despite having been beaten and tortured in prison, never broke down. Andrew Mlangeni, the last accused, made an unsworn statement admitting that he carried messages and instructions for MK and had disguised himself as a priest to facilitate this work. He, too, informed the court that he had been assaulted while in prison, and subjected to electric shock treatment. Andrew was the last witness. The defense rested. All that remained were the final arguments and then judgment.

On the twentieth of May, Yutar handed out a dozen blue leather-bound volumes of his final speech to the press and one to the defense. Despite its handsome packaging, Yutar's address was a garbled summary of the prosecution's case and did not explain the indictment or assess the evidence. It was filled with ad hominem insults. "The deceit of the accused is amazing," he said at one point. "Although they represented scarcely 1% of the Bantu population they took it upon themselves to tell the world that the Africans in South Africa are suppressed, oppressed and depressed." Even Judge de Wet seemed mystified by Yutar's speech, and at one point interrupted

him to say, "Mr. Yutar, you do concede that you failed to prove guerrilla warfare was ever decided upon, do you not?"

Yutar was stunned. He had assumed precisely the opposite. We were surprised as well, for the judge's question gave us hope. Yutar haltingly told the court that preparations for guerrilla warfare were indeed made.

"Yes, I know that," de Wet replied impatiently, "the defense concedes that. But they say that prior to their arrest they took no decision to engage in guerrilla warfare. I take it that you have no evidence contradicting that and that you accept it?"

"As Your Worship wishes," Yutar said in a strangled voice.

Yutar finished by saying that the case was not only one of high treason "par excellence," but of murder and attempted murder — neither of which was mentioned in the indictment. In a fit of bluster, he proclaimed, "I make bold to say that every particular allegation in the indictment has been proved." He knew, even as he uttered those words, that they were patently false.

Defense counsel Arthur Chaskalson rose first to deal with some of the legal questions raised by the prosecution. He rejected Yutar's statement that the trial had anything to do with murder, and reminded the court that MK's express policy was that there should be no loss of life. When Arthur began to explain that other organizations committed acts of sabotage for which the accused were blamed, de Wet interrupted to say he already accepted that as a fact. This was another unexpected victory.

Bram Fischer spoke next and was prepared to tackle the state's two most serious contentions: that we had undertaken guerrilla warfare and that the ANC and MK were the same. Though de Wet had said he believed that guerrilla warfare had not yet begun, we were taking no chances. But as Bram launched into his first point, de Wet interjected somewhat testily, "I thought I made my attitude clear. I accept that no decision or date was fixed upon for guerrilla warfare."

When Bram began his second point, de Wet again interrupted him to say that he also conceded the fact that the two organizations were separate. Bram, who was usually prepared for anything, was hardly prepared for de Wet's response. He then sat down; the judge had accepted his arguments even before he made them. We were

jubilant — that is, if men facing the death sentence can be said to be jubilant. Court was adjourned for three weeks while de Wet considered the verdict.

57

THE WORLD had been paying attention to the Rivonia Trial. Night-long vigils were held for us at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The students of London University elected me president of their Students' Union, in absentia. A group of experts at the U.N. urged a national convention for South Africa that would lead to a truly representative parliament, and recommended an amnesty for all opponents of apartheid. Two days before Judge de Wet was due to give his decision, the U.N. Security Council (with four abstentions, including Great Britain and the United States) urged the South African government to end the trial and grant amnesty to the defendants.

In the days before we were due to reconvene, I wrote papers for a set of London University examinations for my LL.B. It might seem odd that I was taking law exams a few days before the verdict. It certainly seemed bizarre to my guards, who said I would not need a law degree where I was going. But I had continued my studies through the trial and I wanted to take the examinations. I was single-minded about it, and I later realized that it was a way to keep myself from thinking negatively. I knew I would not be practicing law again very soon, but I did not want to consider the alternative. I passed the exams.

On Thursday, June 11, we reassembled in the Palace of Justice for the verdict. We knew that for at least six of us, there could be no verdict but guilty. The question was the sentence.

De Wet wasted no time in getting down to business. He spoke in low, rapid tones. "I have recorded the reasons for the conclusions I have come to. I do not propose to read them out.

"Accused number one is found guilty on all four counts. Accused number two is found guilty on all four counts. Accused number three is found guilty on all four counts. . . ."

De Wet pronounced each of the main accused guilty on all counts.

Kathy was found guilty on only one of four counts, and Rusty Bernstein was found not guilty and discharged.

"I do not propose to deal with the question of sentence today," de Wet said. "The state and the defense will be given opportunities to make any submission they want tomorrow morning at ten o'clock." Court was then adjourned.

We had hoped that Kathy and Mhlaba might escape conviction, but it was another sign, if one was necessary, that the state was taking a harsh line. If he could convict Mhlaba on all four counts with little evidence, could the death sentence be far behind for those of us against whom the evidence was overwhelming?

That night, after a discussion among ourselves, Walter, Govan, and I informed counsel that whatever sentences we received, even the death sentence, we would not appeal. Our decision stunned our lawyers. Walter, Govan, and I believed an appeal would undermine the moral stance we had taken. We had from the first maintained that what we had done, we had done proudly, and for moral reasons. We were not now going to suggest otherwise in an appeal. If a death sentence was passed, we did not want to hamper the mass campaign that would surely spring up. In light of the bold and defiant line we had taken all along, an appeal would seem anticlimactic and even disillusioning. Our message was that no sacrifice was too great in the struggle for freedom. |

Counsel were unhappy about our decision, and wanted to talk about an appeal. But Walter, Govan, and I wanted to discuss the mechanics of the sentencing procedure the next day. If we were sentenced to death, what would then happen? We were told that after de Wet pronounced the death sentence, he would ask me, as the first accused, "Have you any reason to advance why the sentence of death should not be passed?" I told Bram, Joel, and Vernon that in that case I would have quite a lot to say. I would tell de Wet that I was prepared to die secure in the knowledge that my death would be an inspiration to the cause for which I was giving my life. My death — our deaths — would not be in vain; if anything we might serve the cause greater in death as martyrs than we ever could in life. Counsel said that such a speech would not be very helpful for an appeal, and I reaffirmed that we would not be appealing.

Even if — especially if — we did not receive the death penalty, there were practical reasons not to appeal. For one thing, we might lose. An appellate court might decide that de Wet had been too lenient and that we deserved the death penalty. An appeal would forestall international pressure to release us.

For the state, a death sentence would be the most practical verdict. We had heard that John Vorster, the minister of justice, had told friends that Prime Minister Smuts's greatest blunder during the Second World War was not hanging him for his treason. The Nationalists, he said, would not make the same mistake.

I was prepared for the death penalty. To be truly prepared for something, one must actually expect it. One cannot be prepared for something while secretly believing it will not happen. We were all prepared, not because we were brave but because we were realistic. I thought of the line from Shakespeare: "Be absolute for death; for either death or life shall be the sweeter."

58

ON FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 1964, we entered court for the last time. Nearly a year had passed since the fateful arrests at Rivonia. Security was extraordinarily high. Our convoy raced through the streets with sirens wailing. All the roads leading to the courthouse had been blocked off to normal traffic. The police checked the identification of anyone attempting to go near the Palace of Justice. They had even set up checkpoints at the local bus and railway stations. Despite the intimidation, as many as two thousand people assembled in front of the courthouse holding banners and signs such as "WE STAND BY OUR LEADERS." Inside, the spectators' gallery was full, and it was standing room only for the local and foreign press.

I waved hello to Winnie and my mother. It was heartening to see them there; my mother had journeyed all the way from the Transkei. It must be a very odd sensation to come to a courtroom to see whether or not your son will be sentenced to death. Though I suspect my mother did not understand all that was going on, her support never wavered. Winnie was equally stalwart, and her strength gave me strength.

The registrar called out the case: "The State against Mandela and

others." Before the sentence was to be passed, there were two pleas in mitigation. One was delivered by Harold Hanson and the other by the author Alan Paton, who was also national president of the Liberal Party. Hanson spoke eloquently, saying that a nation's grievances cannot be suppressed, that people will always find a way to give voice to those grievances. "It was not their aims which had been criminal," said Hanson, "only the means to which they had resorted." Hanson said the judge would do well to recall that his own people, the Afrikaners, had struggled violently for their freedom.

Though Paton did not himself support violence, he said the accused had had only two alternatives: "to bow their heads and submit, or to resist by force." The defendants should receive clemency, he said, otherwise the future of South Africa would be bleak.

But de Wet did not seem to be listening to either man. He neither looked up nor took any notes while they spoke. He seemed absorbed in his own thoughts. He had obviously already decided; he was merely waiting for the moment to reveal his decision.

He nodded for us to rise. I tried to catch his eye, but he was not even looking in our direction. His eyes were focused on the middle distance. His face was very pale, and he was breathing heavily. We looked at each other and seemed to know: it would be death, otherwise why was this normally calm man so nervous? And then he began to speak.

I have heard a great deal during the course of this case about the grievances of the non-European population. The accused have told me and their counsel have told me that the accused who were all leaders of the non-European population were motivated entirely by a desire to ameliorate these grievances. I am by no means convinced that the motives of the accused were as altruistic as they wish the court to believe. People who organize a revolution usually take over the government and personal ambition cannot be excluded as a motive.

He paused for a moment as if to catch his breath. De Wet's voice, which was muted before, was now barely audible.

The function of this court as is the function of the court in any other country is to enforce law and order and to enforce the laws of the state within which it functions. The crime of which the accused have been

convicted, that is the main crime, the crime of conspiracy, is in essence one of high treason. The state has decided not to charge the crime in this form. Bearing this in mind and giving the matter very serious consideration I have decided not to impose the supreme penalty which in a case like this would usually be the proper penalty for the crime, but consistent with my duty that is the only leniency which I can show. The sentence in the case of all the accused will be one of life imprisonment.

We looked at each other and smiled. There had been a great collective gasp in the courtroom when de Wet announced that he was not sentencing us to death. But there was consternation among some spectators because they had been unable to hear de Wet's sentence. Dennis Goldberg's wife called to him, "Dennis, what is it!?"

"Life!" he yelled back, grinning. "Life! To live!"

I turned and smiled broadly to the gallery, searching out Winnie's face and that of my mother, but it was extremely confused in the court, with people shouting, police pushing the crowd this way and that. I could not see them. I flashed the thumbs-up ANC salute as many of the spectators were dashing outside to tell the crowd the verdict. Our police guardians began to hustle us out of the dock and toward the door leading underground, and although I looked again for Winnie's face, I was not able to see her before I ducked through the door leading to the cells below.

We were kept handcuffed in the cells underneath the courthouse. The police were extremely nervous about the crowd outside. They kept us underground for more than half an hour, hoping people would disperse. We were taken through the back of the building and entered the black van. We could hear the motorcycle escort revving up beside us. To avoid the crowd, the van took a different course, but even so, we could hear the crowd shouting "*Amandla!*" and the slow beautiful rhythms of "*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika.*" We made clenched fists through the bars of the window, hoping the crowd could see us, not knowing if they could.

All of us were now convicted prisoners. We were separated from Dennis Goldberg because he was white and he was taken to a different facility. The rest of us were locked up in cells in Pretoria Local away from all the other prisoners. Instead of shouts and songs, we now heard only the clanging of doors and gates.

* * *

That night, as I lay on my mat on the floor of my cell, I ran over the reasons for de Wet's decision. The demonstrations throughout South Africa and the international pressure undoubtedly weighed on his mind. International trade unions had protested the trial. Dockworkers' unions around the world threatened not to handle South African goods. The Russian prime minister, Leonid Brezhnev, wrote to Dr. Verwoerd asking for leniency. Members of the United States Congress protested. Fifty members of the British Parliament had staged a march in London. Alex Douglas-Home, the British foreign secretary, was rumored to be working behind the scenes to help our cause. Adlai Stevenson, the U.S. representative at the U.N., wrote a letter saying that his government would do everything it could to prevent a death sentence. I thought that once de Wet had accepted that we had not yet initiated guerrilla warfare and that the ANC and MK were separate entities, it would have been difficult to impose the death penalty; it would have seemed excessive.

Verwoerd told Parliament that the judgment had not been influenced by the telegrams of protest and representations that had come in from around the world. He boasted that he had tossed into the wastebasket all the telegrams from socialist nations.

Towards the end of the proceedings, Judge de Wet had remarked in passing to Bram Fischer that the defense had generated a great deal of worldwide propaganda in the case. This was perhaps his own way of acknowledging the pressure. He knew that if we were executed, the great majority of the people would regard him as our killer.

Yet he was under even greater pressure from his own people. He was a white Afrikaner, a creature of the South African system and mind-set. He had no inclination to go against the belief system that had formed him. He had succumbed to these pressures by sentencing us to life and resisted them by not giving us death.

I was surprised and displeased by the sentences de Wet imposed on Kathrada, Motsoaledi, and Mlangeni. I had expected him to discharge Kathy, and to give Elias and Andrew lighter sentences. The latter two were comparatively junior members of MK, and the combined offenses of the three of them could hardly be compared with those of the rest of us. But by not appealing, we undoubtedly cost Kathy, Andrew, and Elias: an appeals court might have cut down their sentences.

Every evening, in Pretoria Local, before lights were out, the jail would echo to African prisoners singing freedom songs. We too would sing in this great swelling chorus. But, each evening, seconds before the lights were dimmed, as if in obedience to some silent command, the hum of voices would stop and the entire jail would become silent. Then, from a dozen places throughout the prison, men would yell "*Amandla!*" This would be met by hundreds of voices replying "*Ngawethu!*" Often, we would start this call-and-response ourselves, but that night, other nameless prisoners took the initiative, and the voices from around the prison seemed uncommonly strong as though steeling us for what lay ahead.

Part Eight

ROBBEN ISLAND: THE DARK YEARS