THE TURN TO SABOTAGE BY THE CONGRESS MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA*

Before the 1960s, the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies were officially committed to the use of exclusively non-violent means in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. But in December 1961 a new organization, Umkhonto we Sizwe ('Spear of the Nation'), announced its launch with a wave of bombings of unoccupied government installations. In the manifesto they released at the time of these first attacks, the commanders of the new body declared that 'The government policy of force, repression and violence will no longer be met with non-violent resistance only!' Though Umkhonto (MK) described itself as a 'new, independent body', it had been founded by Nelson Mandela of the ANC and Joe Slovo of the South African Communist Party (SACP), with the authorization of both bodies. Ten months after the first bombings, the ANC's national conference formally recognized MK as the 'military wing of our struggle'.[1]

Why did leaders of the ANC and its allies in the broader Congress movement[2] abandon their exclusive reliance on non-

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[1] Command of Umkonto [*sic*] We Sizwe, 'Umkonto We Sizwe', 16 Dec. 1961; National Executive of the ANC, 'The People Accept the Challenge of the Nationalists', 6 Apr. 1963, in Thomas Karis and Gail M. Gerhart (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, 6 vols., iii, *Challenge and Violence, 1953–1964* (Stanford, 1977), 716, 749.

[2] I use 'Congress movement' (and 'Congress' as an adjective) to refer collectively to *both* the ANC (the membership of which was, until 1969, exclusively African) *and* the organizations that formally or informally were allied with or supported the ANC and endorsed the 'Freedom Charter' (adopted at the 1955 'Congress of the People') as a blueprint for post-apartheid South Africa. The term 'Congress movement' thus encompasses the four organizations that, together with the ANC, were members of the formal 'Congress Alliance' established following the Congress of the People: the

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violent means and 'turn to violence' in 1961? In the past decade and a half, this question has become the subject of heated controversy amongst historians of South Africa. Until the 1990s, the topic lay at the periphery of a South African historiography that was dominated by the study of social history 'from below': most scholars evinced limited interest in the activities of the national leaders of formal political organizations.[3] At a time when little archival material was available and most of the leading protagonists were either in prison or reluctant to talk openly about internal decision-making, those secondary accounts that addressed the question at all tended to reiterate the explanation Mandela himself had given in 1964 at the Rivonia Trial, in which he and other Congress leaders were tried for sabotage.

In his statement from the dock during the trial, Mandela stressed the Congress movement's long-standing commitment to achieving change by exclusively non-violent means. Quoting and expanding upon the justification MK's commanders had given in their founding manifesto, he explained that it was 'only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of struggle. We did so not because we desired such a course, but solely because the Government had left us with no other choice'.[4] Through the 1990s, the explanation given by Mandela and the MK High Command —

(n. 2 cont.)
South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Organisation (renamed the Coloured People's Congress in 1959), the [white] Congress of Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions. The term 'Congress movement' also encompasses the underground SACP, which was founded in 1953, following the banning and dissolution of the Communist Party of South Africa in 1950. Members of the SACP were instructed in the 1950s to join the appropriate body of the above-ground Congress Alliance, and the Party declared its 'unqualified support' for the Freedom Charter.

[3] Jonathan Hyslop, 'E. P. Thompson in South Africa: The Practice and Politics of Social History in an Era of Revolt and Transition', *International Review of Social History*, lxi (2016); Tom Lodge, 'Reflections on *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*', *South African Historical Journal*, lxiv (2012); Jeremy Seekings, 'Whose Voices? Politics and Methodology in the Study of Political Organisation and Protest in the Final Phase of the "Struggle" in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, lxii (2010).

[4] [Nelson Mandela], 'I Am Prepared to Die', 20 Apr. 1964, *Nelson Mandela Foundation*, available at <http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS010>.

that they had remained committed to non-violence until they concluded, in 1960–1, that government repression had rendered exclusively peaceful methods infeasible — was repeated in most secondary accounts.[5]

Much of the twenty-first-century explosion of scholarship on the ANC's 'armed struggle' has questioned this explanation.[6] Instead, recent research implies that the government's actions in 1960–1 created an opportunity for advocates of using violent means to implement a project to which they had long been committed. A new consensus is emerging: the police massacre of unarmed protesters at Sharpeville in 1960 was, in the words of Saul Dubow, 'not so much the proximate cause of the turn to sabotage as the trigger for a plan that had been discussed in small circles for some time'.[7] And whereas earlier scholarship tended to accept Mandela's assertion that opponents of apartheid had no choice but to turn to violence, recent research has highlighted the extent of contemporary opposition to that conclusion within the Congress movement.

Within this new consensus, recent historiographical controversy has centred on the precise identity of the advocates and opponents of violence within the Congress movement. One set of debates has focused on the role of the SACP. The late Stephen Ellis argued that the Party — with the support and encouragement of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China — 'bounced' the ANC into adopting violence.[8] More

[5] Howard Barrell, *MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle* (London, 1990), 1–9; Edward Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa: A Case Study* (Evanston, 1971), esp. 8–9, 58–9, 167–70; Sheridan Johns, 'Obstacles to Guerrilla Warfare — A South African Case Study', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, xi (1973), 267–73; [Thomas Karis], 'The Turn to Violence since May 31, 1961', in Karis and Gerhart (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge*, iii, *Challenge and Violence*, 645–9, 659; Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London, 1983), 231–5.

[6] For an overview of recent debates, see Thula Simpson, 'Nelson Mandela and the Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle: Notes on Method', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, xliv (2018), 133–48. An important catalyst for this explosion of interest was the publication of Bernard Magubane *et al.*, 'The Turn to Armed Struggle', in South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, 7 vols., i, *1960–1970* (Cape Town, 2004).

[7] Saul Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives in the Wake of the Sharpeville-Langa Violence in South Africa, 1960?', *Journal of African History*, lvi (2015), 131.

[8] Stephen Ellis, 'The Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle in South Africa 1948–1961', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, xxxvii (2011); Stephen Ellis, 'Nelson Mandela, the South African Communist Party and the Origins of Umkhonto we Sizwe', *Cold War History*, xvi (2016).

plausibly, Paul Landau has qualified that conclusion by disaggregating the SACP: the 'turn to violence' was a project not of the Party as a whole, Landau argues, but rather of the so-called 'Sophiatown group', a group of 'Communist African men from within the ANC hierarchy' including, most importantly, Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela.[9] A second set of debates has focused on the role and attitude of Albert Lutuli, president of the ANC from 1952 to 1967. Contradicting decades of assertions by ANC representatives, Scott Couper has argued that Lutuli remained committed to the exclusive use of non-violence and that he consistently opposed the use of violence.[10] Couper's claims provoked a storm of controversy, both in the public sphere in South Africa and amongst scholars.[11]

As the participants in these controversies emphasize, such debates are of obvious relevance to the politics of commemoration and legitimacy in contemporary South Africa.[12] But they also leave crucial historical questions unexamined. In much of the recent literature, the question of *who* supported the 'turn to violence' either simply replaces or is assumed to answer the question of *why* it happened. It is implicit in Ellis's account, for instance, that the commitment of MK's founders to using violent means was inherent in their commitment to communism.[13] In the accounts of those scholars sceptical of Ellis's tale of communist conspiracy, the supposed long-standing

[9] Paul S. Landau, 'The ANC, MK, and "The Turn to Violence" (1960–1962)', *South African Historical Journal*, lxiv (2012). See also Dubow, 'Were There Political Alternatives'; Tom Lodge, 'Secret Party: South African Communists between 1950 and 1960', *South African Historical Journal*, lxvii (2015), 453–64.

[10] Scott Couper, *Albert Luthuli: Bound by Faith* (Scottsville, 2010).

[11] Raymond Suttner, '"The Road to Freedom is via the Cross": "Just Means" in Chief Albert Luthuli's Life', *South African Historical Journal*, lxii (2010); Robert Trent Vinson and Benedict Carton, 'Albert Luthuli's Private Struggle: How an Icon of Peace Came to Accept Sabotage in South Africa', *Journal of African History*, lix (2018).

[12] In addition to the works cited above, see, for instance, Scott Couper, 'Irony upon Irony upon Irony: The Mythologising of Nationalist History in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, lxiii (2011); Stephen Ellis, 'ANC Suppresses Real History to Boost its Claim to Legitimacy', *Mail & Guardian*, 3 Jan. 2014, at <https://mg.co.za/article/2014-01-02-anc-suppresses-real-history-to-boost-its-claim-to-legitimacy>.

[13] In earlier work, Ellis and his then co-author explained the SACP's 'faith in armed struggle' as conforming 'to the Marxist-Leninist tradition, established in 1917, of seeking power by force rather than other means'. Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba [Oyama Mabandla], *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile* (London, 1991), 200.

commitment to 'armed struggle' on the part of Mandela, Sisulu and their fellow 'hardliners' is left unexplained.

Also unexplained is the specific form of violence that the founders of MK initially adopted. Of the various forms of violent action they could have undertaken, why did MK's commanders initially launch a campaign of non-lethal sabotage? In his address from the dock, Mandela, with his emphasis on the Congress movement's long-standing preference for peaceful solutions, again echoed claims made in MK's original manifesto. The organization's commanders, Mandela insisted, chose sabotage in the hope that the abolition of white supremacy might still be achieved without the far more extensive and interpersonal violence of civil war. They hoped, he explained, that sabotage 'would in the long run be a heavy drain on the economic life of the country, thus compelling the voters of the country to reconsider their position'.[14] Hamstrung by a lack of sources, most older studies tended to quote the explanations for MK's use of sabotage that were given at the time by Mandela and the MK High Command.

In contrast, most recent scholars now assume that MK's commanders understood sabotage, in Landau's words, as 'not just a nudge to the state, not just "armed propaganda", but [as] a prelude to, or a part of, *guerrilla war*'.[15] But historians have not explained *why* MK's commanders should have believed that a campaign of bombing symbolic targets in urban areas was a necessary prelude to guerrilla warfare. Though naturalized in most recent accounts, this approach was highly unusual. None of the guerrilla insurgencies that liberation movements attempted to launch against colonial and white minority rule elsewhere in southern Africa in the 1960s involved a distinct, preliminary and extended phase of non-lethal symbolic sabotage. Nor did the earlier guerrilla struggles further afield from which Congress leaders drew inspiration.

In South Africa and beyond, historiographical attention has begun to shift from the history of resistance 'from below' to the ideas and the international influences and interactions of those

[14] [Mandela], 'I Am Prepared to Die'.

[15] Landau, 'ANC, MK, and "The Turn to Violence"', 554–7. For a notable dissent from this interpretation, see Thula Simpson, 'The People's War of Umkhonto we Sizwe, 1961–1990' (School of Oriental and African Studies, Univ. of London Ph.D. thesis, 2006), 67–74.

'above'. Much recent scholarship on the 'armed struggle' in South Africa has, for instance, emphasized the influence on the Congress leadership of external actors and models from the Soviet Union, China, Algeria, Palestine, Cuba and elsewhere.[16] Such emphases reflect both the welcome re-emergence of attention to 'high politics' in African history, and the broader 'transnational turn' in the historical profession. But there is a danger — in this field as in others — that overemphasis on the transnational networks and connections of elite actors can obscure the internal dynamics of the organizations they led. Too narrow a focus on the high politics of resistance can lead historians to treat every political action as a direct attempt to influence or overthrow the oppressor, and to misinterpret activities intended to mobilize, maintain or manage potentially supportive constituencies. And a transnational lens should illuminate not only similarities and connections, but also differences and disconnects.

This article advances an interpretation of the Congress movement's 'turn to violence' that explains both why the founders of MK decided in 1960–1 (and not earlier) to abandon their reliance on exclusively non-violent methods, and why their 'turn to violence' took the specific and unusual form that it did. A number of both older and more recent accounts note in passing that one of the reasons Mandela gave at the Rivonia Trial for founding MK was that he and his comrades had believed that

> violence by the African people had become inevitable, and that unless responsible leadership was given to canalise and control the feelings of our people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism which would produce an intensity of bitterness and hostility between the various races of the country which is not produced even by war.[17]

There is now extensive evidence that this factor was not simply 'another consideration' or one of a number of 'other motives' of the founders of MK.[18] Rather, the evidence now available shows

[16] Ellis, 'Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle', 660–4, 671–2; Landau, 'ANC, MK, and "The Turn to Violence,"' 540, 546, 555–9; Elleke Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2008), 104–7; Allison Drew, 'Visions of Liberation: The Algerian War of Independence and its South African Reverberations', *Review of African Political Economy*, xlii (2015); Robert J. C. Young, 'Fanon and the Turn to Armed Struggle in Africa', *Wasafiri*, xx (2005).

[17] [Mandela], 'I Am Prepared to Die'.

[18] Lodge, *Black Politics*, 233; [Karis], 'Turn to Violence', 647.

that both before and during the 'turn to sabotage', the determining factor in Congress leaders' attitudes towards the use of violent means was their fear of the social and political consequences of popular enthusiasm for violence and of the possibility that such popular enthusiasm might lead to violence becoming indiscriminate. Once the decision to 'turn to violence' had been made, the same fear also determined the *form* of the violent activities that were undertaken by MK.

The evidence for this interpretation includes previously undiscovered archival materials in South Africa and beyond,[19] as well as internal MK documents that were captured by the police and submitted as evidence in the Rivonia Trial. The archival record is, however, fragmentary: often, potentially incriminating records were not kept at all, or were destroyed in order to prevent their capture. Despite the limitations of memory-based sources for analysing the history of strategy and decision-making, this article also draws on memoirs and on oral histories conducted and made available by previous researchers. Particularly valuable are those oral histories that were conducted between 1989 and 1994 by interviewers who were — to varying degrees — 'insiders', trusted by their interviewees. In this transitional period of increasing openness, leading protagonists had been released from prison and Congress leaders were more willing than previously to discuss internal decision-making. But the exact outcome of the struggle against apartheid was not yet known. Retrospective and teleological narratives had not yet solidified.[20]

Far from having a long-standing 'plan' for eventual violent struggle, Congress leaders — including the future founders of MK — spent the 1950s resisting and suppressing popular enthusiasm for the use of violence. The decisive change in 1960–1 that led some Congress leaders to change course was not so much the increase in repression after Sharpeville, but the rise in grass-roots enthusiasm for using violence and the

[19] See ns. 68, 91, 95 and 117 below.

[20] 'Insider' interviewers included Howard Barrell, a former member of the ANC who had 'worked with, or under [some of his interviewees] on clandestine ANC projects', and Barbara Harmel, the daughter of leading SACP theorist Michael Harmel, who had herself joined the Congress underground in 1963 before going into exile in 1964. Howard Barrell, 'Conscripts to their Age: African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976–1986' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1993), 19–21; see also further discussions of oral sources in Simpson, 'People's War', 26–30.

emergence of rival groups that might channel that enthusiasm if the Congress movement did not. The MK High Command did not launch their campaign of urban sabotage because they believed that this would prompt a white change of heart, nor because they believed that such a campaign was a necessary prelude to the launch of rural guerrilla warfare. Rather, sabotage bombings were a spectacular placeholder, a stopgap intended to advertise the Congress movement's abandonment of exclusive non-violence and thus to discourage opponents of apartheid from supporting rival groups or initiating violent action themselves. Following the first bombings in 1961, Congress leaders quickly concluded that the sabotage campaign had achieved these objectives. But the campaign had unexpected consequences that ultimately undermined the Congress movement's ability to undertake other forms of action against apartheid.

I

AVERTING A SOUTH AFRICAN 'MAU MAU' IN THE 1950S

For years before MK was formed, national leaders of the Congress movement felt under pressure from their own constituency to adopt some form of violent action. 'Through the 1950s there was this pressure from below', recalled Govan Mbeki, a member of the ANC National Executive and of the SACP Central Committee.[21] In both urban and rural areas, this pressure to adopt some form of violent action came from some in the lower leadership tiers of the ANC's regional and local structures and from grass-roots activists, as well as from the broader African constituency to which Congress leaders sought to appeal.

In the countryside, recollections and oral traditions of primary resistance to colonization fuelled scepticism of the Congress movement's exclusive adherence to non-violence. Mbeki recalled a rural meeting during the Congress movement's 'Defiance Campaign' of civil disobedience in 1952 at which one old man told him that Africans had been defeated in the wars of colonization because of the colonizers' superior weaponry. Until

[21] Govan Mbeki, interview by Phil Bonner and Barbara Harmel, 28 Oct. 1993, p. 7, B7.2, Barbara Harmel Interviews, Historical Papers Research Archive (aka Wits Historical Papers: hereafter WHP), University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

this imbalance of firepower was corrected, the man told Mbeki, non-violent defiance was pointless and would do no more than 'tickle the Boers'.[22]

Throughout the 1950s, as Mbeki noted, Africans frequently resorted to violent forms of resistance to state intervention in rural societies, 'whether or not the ANC or the SACP supported their action'.[23] Sometimes such resistance took the form of sabotage, such as burning crops, or destroying dipping tanks or fences. More occasionally, resistance escalated into more widespread violence: in rural revolts, most notably in Zeerust in 1957–8 and Sekhukhuneland in 1958, Africans suspected of collaborating with the government were burned out of their homes, assaulted and sometimes killed. Some ANC and SACP members were involved in these rural revolts, including members of local leadership structures. The revolt in Sekhukhuneland, for instance, may have been influenced by Flag Boshielo, a member of the ANC's Transvaal provincial executive and the SACP's Johannesburg District Committee, who had immersed himself in reading about the Mau Mau revolt against British rule in Kenya and argued for the adoption of similar guerrilla tactics in South Africa.[24]

In the cities, *tsotsis* — youthful African gang members — were especially scornful of the ANC's exclusive adherence to non-violence. Former gang leader Don Mattera recalled meeting ANC activists in the 1950s in Sophiatown, the freehold suburb west of Johannesburg, and wondering 'When are these people going to fight?'[25] When the ANC recruited five hundred local 'Freedom Volunteers' to oppose the government's plan to start removing the entire African population from Sophiatown in 1955, the volunteers demanded that the Congress leadership allow them to erect barricades and resist with force.[26]

[22] Mbeki, interview by Bonner and Harmel, 5.

[23] Govan Mbeki, *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: A Short History* (Cape Town, 1992), 88.

[24] Peter Delius, *A Lion amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Portsmouth, NH, 1996), 131–2.

[25] Clive Glaser, ' "When Are They Going to Fight?" Tsotsis, Youth Politics and the PAC', in Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel (eds.), *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935–1962* (Braamfontein, 1993), 301.

[26] Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, untitled jail memoir, n.d. [1976], 160–1, Nelson Mandela Foundation, available at <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/images/uploads/LWOM.pdf>; Walter Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing: Walter Sisulu Speaks of his Life and Struggle for Freedom* (Cape Town, 2001), 103.

As in rural areas, Africans in the cities frequently resorted to violent forms of resistance to state intervention without the sanction of the national Congress leadership. *Tsotsis* were frequently involved in violent interpersonal clashes with police attempting to intervene in African urban life. Whereas the ANC was still perceived to be preoccupied with the politics of memoranda and petitions, Mattera recalled, 'Our memorandum was a knife and a gun. We petitioned ourselves in blood'.[27] Urban resistance sometimes took the form of targeted sabotage, such as destroying municipal offices or government beer halls, or more extensive rioting. Most famously, riots broke out in Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and East London during the Defiance Campaign. Six white bystanders were killed by the rioters.

Within the Congress leadership, some Gandhians and liberal nationalists — including ANC president Lutuli — rejected violence on principle. But many others — including Mandela and his close comrade Walter Sisulu, the ANC's secretary-general — believed that the use of violent methods was not a matter of principle but of the tactics best suited to the prevailing circumstances.[28] Given the pressure from below to abandon exclusive non-violence, and the unsanctioned violent activity by their subordinates, supporters and wider constituency, Congress leaders frequently debated whether circumstances warranted a change in approach. In 1953, Mandela asked Sisulu to visit China to explore whether Mao Tse-tung's government would provide assistance — including weaponry — if the ANC were to adopt violent methods. Sisulu happened to visit China at a particularly unpropitious moment, however: the armistice halting the Korean War and the adoption of China's first Five-Year Plan the same year had had the combined effect of tempering the Chinese government's enthusiasm for supporting revolution elsewhere and of focusing its attention on its domestic agenda.[29] Chinese officials cautioned

[27] Glaser, '"When Are They Going to Fight?"', 301.

[28] Mandela, jail memoir, 329; 'Mandela–Stengel Conversations: Transcripts of the Audio Recordings of Conversations in 1992 and 1993 between Nelson Mandela and Richard Stengel during the Making of *Long Walk to Freedom*', pp. 377–8, 441, 521, unpublished document, Nelson Mandela Foundation, Johannesburg.

[29] Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 49–50, 54–5.

Sisulu that violent struggle was 'not child's play' and should only be attempted when the conditions were right.[30]

Throughout the 1950s the Congress leadership always decided against initiating or preparing for any form of violent action. With hindsight — long after the ANC had subsequently 'turned to violence' — Sisulu and Mandela would sometimes claim later that, by the time of Sisulu's visit to China, 'though we believed in the policy of nonviolence, we knew in our heart of hearts it wasn't going to be a satisfactory answer'. In his memoirs, Mandela recalled surveying the dense forest during a drive though the Eastern Cape in 1955 and dwelling on 'the fact that there were many places a guerrilla army could live and train undetected'.[31] But while Mandela and Sisulu did not rule out the possibility that a change of circumstances might warrant the use of violence at some future point, they did not behave as though they believed such a change was imminent or likely. Despite Chinese officials' insistence to Sisulu that 'You have to prepare', Mandela and Sisulu did not undertake any logistical or educational preparations for turning their guerrilla daydreams into reality.[32]

Congress leaders not only resisted pressure from below for the Congress movement itself to initiate or prepare for violent action. They also declined to sanction or facilitate violent activity by supporters. When rebels from Sekhukhuneland asked the Congress leadership to provide them with guns in 1958, for instance, they were sent away empty-handed.[33] Instead, Congress leaders condemned and sought to suppress the unsanctioned violent activity that nonetheless occurred. In 1952 the local ANC leadership publicly condemned the riots in Port Elizabeth as an 'unfortunate, reckless, ill-considered return to jungle law'. The rioters in East London, Joe Slovo declared while defending some of them in court, were 'natives of a primitive state'.[34]

[30] Walter Sisulu, interview by Phil Bonner, 15 July 1993, p. 4, B21.4; Walter Sisulu, interview by Barbara Harmel, 11 Nov. 1993, pp. 6–7, B21.6, Harmel Interviews.

[31] Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing*, 89; Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London, 1995), 183, 218–19.

[32] Sisulu, interview by Harmel, 11 Nov. 1993, 7.

[33] Delius, *Lion amongst the Cattle*, 132.

[34] 'Statement on Violence in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth . . . by Local ANC Leaders', 20 Oct. 1952, in Thomas Karis (ed.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, ii, *Hope and Challenge, 1935–*

(cont. on p. 232)

Mandela, Sisulu and other national leaders of the Congress movement continued to adhere to exclusive non-violence in part because of their optimism about what could be achieved by non-violent action. The ANC's deputy president Oliver Tambo explained to an interviewer in 1963 that in the previous decade Congress leaders had 'thought that they wouldn't need violence, that large numbers and mass demonstrations would be sufficient'.[35] Most Congress leaders in the 1950s did not seriously believe that the National Party politicians then implementing apartheid could themselves be compelled to change their ways. But they did think that it might be possible to bring about a realignment in white politics that would remove the architects of apartheid from power and lead eventually to the abolition of white supremacy.[36]

Optimism that apartheid could be ended quickly and peacefully was fuelled both by Congress leaders' own experiences in the course of the decade and by the rapid progress of decolonization elsewhere in Asia and Africa. For some, it was also confirmed by shifts in the strategic line of the international communist movement. In 1956 Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev endorsed the shifts in strategic thinking already under way in some western European communist parties, arguing that 'violence and civil war' were not 'the only way to remake society' and affirming the possibility of achieving a transition to socialism by 'parliamentary means'. These shifts were carefully observed by communists in South Africa: commitment to communism did not translate automatically into a belief that ending apartheid must necessarily involve violence.[37]

(n. 34 cont.)
1952 (Stanford, 1973), 485; Anne Mager and Gary Minkley, 'Reaping the Whirlwind: The East London Riots of 1952', in Bonner, Delius and Posel (eds.), *Apartheid's Genesis*, 231.

[35] [Gwendolen Carter], 'Discussion with Oliver Tambo', 15 Nov. 1963, p. 4, Folder 37, Part 1, Karis–Gerhart Collection of South African Political Materials, 1964–1990, WHP.

[36] Simon Stevens, 'Boycotts and Sanctions against South Africa: An International History, 1946–1970' (Columbia Univ. Ph.D. diss., 2016), 127–9.

[37] Nikita Khrushchev, 'From the "Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 20th Congress of the CPSU"', 14 Feb. 1956, in *On Peaceful Co-Existence* (Moscow, 1961), 12–14; Lionel Forman, 'Why Do We Write — and Argue — So Little About Socialism?', *Fighting Talk*, Nov. 1956, 16; Michael Harmel, 'Revolutions Are Not Abnormal', *Africa South*, Jan.–Mar. 1959, 17.

Mandela, Sisulu and most other Congress leaders remained committed to exclusive non-violence not only because of their optimism about what they could achieve in this way, but also because of their pessimism about the possible consequences of initiating or sanctioning violent activity. British journalist Anthony Sampson, who edited *Drum* magazine in Johannesburg from 1951 to 1955, observed that 'a disunited rising of an angry mob was much more of a nightmare to Congress than to the Government leaders who so freely invoked it as a danger'.[38] In Kenya in the same period, the educated, moderate nationalist leadership of the Kenya African Union had been displaced by mostly younger 'Mau Mau' Kikuyu militants committed to the use of violent means, including the assassination of African informers and government employees and (on a much smaller scale) the killing of white settlers. This had led to an intra-Kikuyu civil war, racial polarization and massive repression by the colonial state. Congress leaders had no desire to initiate or sanction activity that might unleash similar dynamics in South Africa.

Congress leaders' pessimism about the consequences of violence had two dimensions. First, they believed that although the architects of apartheid were politically vulnerable, the strength of the state apparatus they controlled would enable them to respond to violent resistance with drastic repression against black South Africans and their political organizations. The police had suppressed the rioting in East London in 1952 with murderous violence, killing as many as two hundred people.[39] 'The reason why non-violence was stressed so much before 1961', Tambo explained two years later, 'was that it was obvious that violent tactics would be met by overwhelming retaliation'.[40] At the moment when the national Congress leadership came closest to sanctioning the use of violence — when the ANC's volunteers wanted to resist the 1955 Sophiatown removals with force — Congress leaders pulled

[38] Anthony Sampson, *The Treason Cage: The Opposition on Trial in South Africa* (London, 1958), 96.

[39] Oliver M. Murphy, 'Race, Violence, and Nation: African Nationalism and Popular Politics in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1948–1970' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 2013), 87–95.

[40] [Carter], 'Discussion with Oliver Tambo', 4.

back precisely because most of them concluded that violent resistance would be 'suicide'.[41]

Second, Congress leaders were pessimistic about the consequences of violence because they feared not only the reaction of the government, but also the reaction of their own political constituency. The Congress leadership was haunted by the fear that action by their supporters could spiral out of their control into indiscriminate and/or racialized violence. This fear shaped their approach even to exclusively non-violent campaigns. Congress leaders organized their campaigns in ways they hoped would enable them to maintain control and minimize the likelihood of violent confrontations. The 1952 Defiance Campaign, for instance, did not involve mass civil disobedience. The campaign was carefully orchestrated: acts of disobedience were to be carried out only by 'selected and trained' volunteers.[42] And as Mbeki later explained, the Defiance Campaign was not carried out in areas where Congress leaders feared 'we won't be able to control it': Mbeki himself had advised against expanding the campaign to the rural Transkei because he feared Congress leaders would be unable 'to stop the peasants attacking [isolated white] traders'.[43]

Congress leaders were even more sceptical that they would be able to control their supporters in any kind of violent activity. Though Congress representatives expressed solidarity with the opponents of colonial rule in Kenya, few of the more senior members of the ANC shared Flag Boshielo's enthusiasm for Mau Mau as a model. 'Mau-Mau tactics', associated with indiscriminate violence against African 'loyalists' and white settlers, were to be condemned and discouraged, not replicated.[44] Raymond Mhlaba, an ANC and SACP leader based in Port Elizabeth, who by his own account was one of the

[41] Mandela, jail memoir, 160–1; Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing*, 103.

[42] J. S. Moroka *et al.*, 'Report of the Joint Planning Council', 8 Nov. 1951, in Karis (ed.), *From Protest to Challenge*, ii, *Hope and Challenge*, 462; Julian Brown, 'Public Protest and Violence in South Africa, 1948–1976' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 2009), 40–54.

[43] Mbeki, interview by Bonner and Harmel, 6.

[44] Mandela, jail memoir, 289; Anna Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945–1959* (Portsmouth, NH, 1999), 83; Leslie J. Bank and Benedict Carton, 'Forgetting Apartheid: History, Culture and the Body of a Nun', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, lxxxvi (2016), 479 n. 33.

first senior leaders to begin 'advocating armed struggle' in the late 1950s, found that other Congress leaders thought he was 'mad'. The prospect of a 'racial war', he recalled, was 'the fundamental fear regarding armed struggle'.[45]

II

DECIDING TO FORM UMKHONTO WE SIZWE, 1960–1961

Mandela thus summed up the political dynamic of the 1950s accurately when he stated at the Rivonia Trial 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 pursue peaceful methods'.[46] This dynamic changed after the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960, when police fired on a crowd of peaceful protesters mobilized by the rival Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which had broken away from the ANC the previous year. In December 1960 the underground SACP's national conference resolved that the Congress movement as a whole must reconsider 'its tactics of exclusive reliance on non-violent methods'. The conference delegates — who included long-standing white and black communists like Slovo and the Party's general secretary, Moses Kotane, as well as more recent recruits like Sisulu, and Mandela[47] — mandated 'steps to initiate the training and equipping of selected personnel in new methods of struggle, and thus prepare the nucleus of an adequate apparatus to lead struggles of a more forcible and violent character'.[48]

In June 1961 Mandela presented a proposal to 'turn to violence' to the ANC National Executive, and then to the Joint Executives of the Congress Alliance, the umbrella body of the ANC and its formal allies (the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the Congress of [white]

[45] Raymond Mhlaba, interview by Phil Bonner and Barbara Harmel, 27 Oct. 1993 [Part II], B8.1, Harmel Interviews.

[46] [Mandela], 'I Am Prepared to Die'.

[47] For the most measured assessment of the available evidence on the controversial subject of Mandela's relationship with the SACP, see Lodge, 'Secret Party', 460–2.

[48] Quoted in 'Memorandum', n.d. [*c.*late 1962/early 1963], p. 1, File A6.1.4.1, Ronald Kasrils Papers, WHP.

Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions). Several senior participants in these meetings, including Lutuli, vigorously opposed Mandela's proposal. But eventually they acquiesced to a compromise: Mandela was permitted to form an independent body to carry out acts of violence, while the ANC and the other member organizations of the Alliance would continue to engage in non-violent activity. Mandela subsequently formed a 'High Command', including Sisulu, Slovo and Mandela himself as commander-in-chief. The SACP squads Slovo had already established in accordance with the Party's December conference decision were merged into the new organization, Umkhonto we Sizwe.[49]

In part, the Congress leadership's greater openness to the use of violent means was a response to intensified repression after Sharpeville. Ten days after the massacre, the government declared a state of emergency: nearly two thousand activists — including almost the entire Congress Alliance leadership — were imprisoned without trial. On 8 April 1960, both the ANC and the PAC were banned. The arrests caught the Congress leadership off guard: the movement was effectively paralysed inside the country until the end of August, when the emergency was lifted and those still detained were released. Nevertheless, the initial intensification of repression following the Sharpeville Emergency was a shift more in degree than in kind, and did not immediately cause Congress leaders to revise their assessment of the nature of their opponent. Though horrifying in its scale, the massacre of more than sixty-nine unarmed protesters at Sharpeville was far from the first time South African police had used lethal force. Nor was the banning of the ANC unexpected: this long-threatened move had been anticipated for several years.

What shifted the calculations of many Congress leaders in 1960–1 was less the reaction of the government than the reaction of their own supporters and broader constituency. During the nineteen days it took the government to restore order after Sharpeville, there was a massive upsurge in protest and violence across the country. To protest the massacre, Lutuli called for supporters to burn their passes and participate in a one-day 'stay-at-home'. But many went further, setting fire not only to their own passes, but to schools, churches, buses and municipal

[49] Mandela, jail memoir, 421–5.

offices.[50] In rural areas there were further outbreaks in 1960 of the violent resistance that had been a frequent feature of the 1950s. Most dramatically, the Intaba ('Mountain') movement in Mpondoland launched violent attacks on government-appointed chiefs and was able to establish itself as an alternative political authority for several months. Like their predecessors in Sekhukhuneland, the Mpondo rebels requested that the Congress leadership provide them with firearms.[51]

In some areas the Sharpeville crisis prompted the formation of organized groups of ANC supporters disillusioned with their leadership's insistence on non-violence. These groups, Mandela explained at the Rivonia Trial, began 'spontaneously making plans for violent forms of political struggle'.[52] One such group in Durban wanted to adopt what they called 'Mau Mau tactics': they began stockpiling bush knives and planned — according to future South African president Jacob Zuma — to go into the centre of the city 'and start butchering everybody. Once they called the police, we would disappear. We would run off to a hiding place to conduct the war'.[53]

Many Congress leaders worried that if they themselves didn't respond to the intensified pressure from below to use violent means, another group might do so and attract mass support. This could be disastrous for the Congress movement's leading position in the struggle against apartheid and — if that struggle were successful — in a future post-apartheid dispensation. In the 1950s, pressure from below had largely been contained *within* the Congress movement: there had been few alternative organizational outlets for it. That was no longer the case after the breakaway of the PAC in 1958–9. Though the PAC's first campaigns were non-violent, PAC leaders often implied the inevitability or even desirability of violence in their speeches. Their confrontational rhetoric and celebration of spontaneous

[50] Archie Sibeko with Joyce Leeson, *Freedom in our Lifetime* (Durban, 1996), 51; Squire Makgothi, interview by Phil Bonner, 22 Feb. 1994, p. 34, B5.1, Harmel Interviews; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 224.

[51] Thomas Nkob[i], interview by Phil Bonner, 24 Nov. 1993, pp. 1–3, B16.2, Harmel Interviews; Ben Turok, interview by Howard Barrell, 21 Feb. 1990, pp. 1322–3, 3/2, Papers of Howard Barrell, Bodleian Library, Oxford; Joe Slovo, *Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography* (Melbourne, 1997), 175.

[52] [Mandela], 'I Am Prepared to Die'.

[53] Douglas Foster, *After Mandela: The Struggle for Freedom in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York, 2012), 305–6.

political action were understood by many of their recruits as signs of commitment to violent struggle.[54] While most of the PAC leadership was incapacitated in prison in 1960–1, groups of PAC supporters calling themselves 'Poqo' began preparing for insurrectionary violence.[55] At the same time, the Sharpeville crisis prompted the formation of additional independent groups committed to using violence. In Johannesburg, a handful of dissident white leftists, liberals and ANC members formed the National Committee for Liberation (NCL). In Pretoria, dissident ANC members formed the 'African Freedom Movement' to replace what they viewed as the moribund ANC.[56]

Some Congress leaders feared that, if they did not initiate violence themselves, these other groups might attract both further defectors from the Congress movement itself and those who were organizationally unaligned. Mandela made this fear of being outflanked the centrepiece of his argument to the Joint Executives of the Congress Alliance in June 1961: 'there is no other way the ANC can remain on top', he insisted, '*unless* it takes a lead on the question of armed struggle'.[57] Congress leaders' fears of being eclipsed by a rival group were exacerbated by the apparent *weakness* of the National Party government after Sharpeville. In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, the government temporarily suspended the pass laws, and briefly struggled to restore order. Amidst a crisis of economic confidence, Afrikaner business leaders, churchmen and politicians — including some members of the government — joined the English-speaking white opposition in critiquing apartheid policies and advocating reform. In these circumstances, Congress leaders feared that a rival group might be able to seize the moment and emerge as the dominant player both in the struggle against apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa. In deciding to take

[54] Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley, 1978), 220–1.

[55] Tom Lodge, 'Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959–1965' (Univ. of York Ph.D. thesis, 1984), 189–203.

[56] Magnus Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)', in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa*, i, *1960–1970*, 2nd edn (Pretoria, 2010), 194–204.

[57] 'Mandela–Stengel Conversations', 620.

violent action in 1961, observed Denis Goldberg, who joined the MK Regional Command in Cape Town, 'people [were] staking out claims for the future'.[58]

This fear of being eclipsed by a rival was further exacerbated by the lessons Congress leaders drew from violent struggles elsewhere, especially the recent revolutionary conflict in Cuba and the ongoing war against French rule in Algeria. The fundamental lesson they drew was the one Mandela noted down verbatim from Che Guevara's critique of the 'defeatist' approach of orthodox communist parties in Latin America in his newly published handbook on *Guerrilla Warfare*: 'It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them'.[59] This lesson was not only an inspiration. It was also a warning. The communist parties in both Algeria and Cuba had insisted that conditions were not ripe for violent action, and had been outflanked by other groups — the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) and Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement respectively — whose armed attacks communist leaders initially declined to endorse or even condemned as terrorism, putschism or adventurism.[60] At one SACP meeting, Slovo highlighted these two cases and warned that 'the world communist movement on [was] going to be left out' if communist parties elsewhere made the same mistake of waiting for the 'objective conditions' for violent action.[61] Mandela drew upon the same salutary lesson in June 1961 when a sceptical Moses Kotane initially vetoed his request to present his proposal to 'turn to violence' to the ANC National Executive. Mandela warned Kotane that 'people were already forming military units on their own' and told him that 'his opposition was like the Communist Party in Cuba': 'The party had insisted that the appropriate conditions had not arrived, and waited . . . Castro did not wait, he acted — and he triumphed'.[62]

[58] Denis Goldberg, interview by Anthony Sampson, 13 Dec. 1996, p. 24, Dep. 168, Papers of Anthony Sampson, Bodleian Library.

[59] Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York, 1961), 15; [Nelson Mandela], 'Guerrilla Warfare by Che Guevara', p. 1, Exhibit R25, MS.385/20, Dr Percy Yutar Papers: The Rivonia Trial, 1963–1964, South African National Archives, Pretoria.

[60] Allison Drew, *We Are No Longer in France: Communists in Colonial Algeria* (Manchester, 2014), 180–99; Steve Cushion, *A Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution: How the Working Class Shaped the Guerillas' Victory* (New York, 2016), 106, 112–13, 126.

[61] Turok, interview by Barrell, 1310–11.

[62] Mandela, *Long Walk*, 321.

Some Congress leaders feared that if the Congress movement waited, and failed to give a lead to grass-roots enthusiasm for violence, the consequences would not only threaten the movement's political position, but would also have a terrible human cost and threaten post-apartheid reconstruction. The kind of attacks on white civilians envisaged by some Poqo adherents — and by ANC supporters like Zuma's group in Durban — were exactly the kind of indiscriminate, racialized violence that Congress leaders had long sought to avert. In his arguments to the Joint Executives of the Congress Alliance in June 1961, Mandela focused on the need to pre-empt such indiscriminate 'terrorism'. 'Look this thing has already started in our country', he told the meeting. 'Let us take the same decision and *lead*. Because otherwise it will just deteriorate into a terrorist movement . . . And if it's a terrorist organisation it's going to lead to the slaughter of human beings. Let us enter and lead'.[63] Throughout the 1950s, Congress leaders' fear of the human, social and political costs of indiscriminate violence and 'racial war' had led them to resist pressure from below to use violence. In the aftermath of Sharpeville, it was precisely the same fear that now led some of them to argue that initiating what Mandela called 'properly controlled violence' was the only means of pre-empting outbreaks of its less controlled forms.[64]

III

THE SABOTAGE CAMPAIGN

On 16 December 1961, MK carried out its first violent actions: in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban, home-made bombs were used to attack 'government installations, particularly those connected with the policy of apartheid and race discrimination', such as Bantu Administration Offices. These symbolic targets were empty at the time: the High Command had given strict instructions to avoid loss of life. The bombings were the first of approximately two hundred acts of sabotage executed by MK over the next three years, a majority of them carried out using incendiary devices or stolen dynamite. The MK High Command claimed that these non-lethal 'first actions' were intended to

[63] 'Mandela–Stengel Conversations', 522.
[64] [Mandela], 'I Am Prepared to Die'.

produce a psychological effect in the white population: their manifesto expressed the hope that the bombings would 'bring the Government and its supporters to their senses before it is too late, so that both Government and its policies can be changed before matters reach the desperate stage of civil war'.[65]

Mandela and Slovo did not seriously believe that the bombings would have this effect. Slovo later stressed that 'Nobody in their wild imaginings dreamt that one could actually overthrow the regime or bring about a revolution through overturning a few pylons and putting some rather weak home-made explosives in relatively innocuous targets'.[66] The initial public claims to the contrary made by MK were propaganda, intended to convince sympathizers inside and outside the Congress movement who were sceptical of the moral legitimacy of lethal interpersonal violence that the government was to blame for the escalation that members of the High Command already believed would be necessary. 'However forlorn the hope' that spectacular sabotage would produce a psychological effect amongst whites, Slovo later explained, the 'expression' of that hope was 'a politically useful bridge between the period of non-violent campaigning and the future people's armed struggle', for it would 'demonstrate that responsibility for the slide towards bloody civil war lay squarely with the regime'.[67]

Rather than seeing sabotage as a free-standing tactic that would be sufficient to change the government and its policies, Mandela and Slovo saw MK's first actions as only the first stage of a violent struggle that would ultimately involve guerrilla warfare. In May 1962, just five months after MK's first attacks, Mandela and two of the ANC's representatives abroad, Oliver Tambo and Robert Resha, co-authored a memorandum to the government of Ghana that described MK as 'the first phase of a comprehensive plan for the waging of guerrilla operations'.[68]

[65] Command of Umkonto We Sizwe, 'Umkonto We Sizwe', 717.

[66] Joe Slovo, 'The Sabotage Campaign', *Dawn: Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe*, Souvenir Issue 1986, 24.

[67] Joe Slovo, 'South Africa — No Middle Road', in Basil Davidson, Joe Slovo and Anthony R. Wilkinson, *Southern Africa: The New Politics of Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1976), 186.

[68] Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and Robert Resha, 'Memorandum Presented to the Government of the Republic of Ghana by the African National Congress of South Africa', 10 May 1962, BAA/RLAA/757, p. 1, Bureau of African Affairs Collection, George Padmore Research Library on African Affairs, Accra.

What still remains to be explained, however, is why the MK High Command believed a distinct, preliminary 'first phase' of sabotage bombings of symbolic targets in urban areas was necessary at all. Indeed, not everyone in MK *did* believe this was necessary. Govan Mbeki — a founder member of MK in Port Elizabeth who later joined the High Command — was apparently amongst those who argued against the sabotage campaign on the grounds that it would simply 'unite the whites'.[69] None of the struggles elsewhere that Mandela and other Congress leaders studied and cited as inspirations had involved a separate phase of this kind that lasted more than a few weeks. The FLN had launched its revolt against French rule in Algeria on 1 November 1954 with co-ordinated attacks that included attempted sabotage bombings of government buildings in Algiers. But the FLN did not restrict the attacks it carried out on its first day to sabotage: FLN guerrillas also launched assaults against police stations and army barracks, as well as assassinations of Algerian 'collaborators'.[70] On 12 February 1944, the Irgun — the Zionist paramilitary group from which Mandela adopted the language of MK's organizational structure — relaunched its revolt against British rule in Palestine with simultaneous bombings in three cities of symbolic targets: empty offices of the Immigration Department, which was responsible for implementing British restrictions on Jewish entry into the territory. But despite the similarities between the launch of MK and the relaunch of the Irgun's revolt, the Irgun did not long restrict itself to non-lethal sabotage of empty offices. Less than six weeks after the initial bombings, Irgun fighters killed six British police in armed commando-style assaults in which they blew up police headquarters buildings in Jerusalem, Haifa and Jaffa.[71]

Nor was the High Command's choice of symbolic sabotage influenced by the advice or preferences of MK's international patrons. Chinese attitudes had shifted since Sisulu's visit to Beijing in 1953. From the late 1950s, the Chinese government

[69] Ben Turok, interview by Gwendolen M. Carter, 15 Mar. 1973, p. 41, ICS143/3/84, Benjamin Turok Papers, Senate House Library, London.

[70] Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (New York, 2006), 83–104.

[71] Bruce Hoffman, *Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917–1947* (New York, 2016), 126–50.

became increasingly enthusiastic in its support of 'using violence and arms to conduct struggle' in the colonized world.[72] The Soviet Union was also taking an increased interest in national liberation in the global south: in January 1961, Khrushchev famously announced Soviet support for anti-colonial 'wars of national liberation'. In 1960–1 SACP representatives discussed the adoption of violent methods with officials from both the Soviet Union and China, and secured promises of support, including training and funding. But there is no evidence that these discussions influenced the specific form of MK's initial activities. Soviet officials were supportive but cautious, stressing, as one SACP representative recalled, that the use of violence 'was our decision and they were not going to be involved in that decision'.[73] The Chinese were more dogmatic. In meetings in late 1960 with Mao and other Chinese officials, SACP representatives were concerned to find that the Chinese 'el[e]vated into a law-governed principle of revolutionary struggle the Chinese experience of the long march and forms of armed struggle', and prioritized the role of the peasantry over that of the working class.[74] The Chinese were apparently nonplussed by MK's subsequent campaign of urban sabotage. During a visit to China in 1962, Arthur Goldreich of MK's Logistics Committee asked Chinese officials: 'What part does sabotage play in the initial stages in (i) Urban Areas (ii) Rural Areas'[?]. Goldreich's Chinese interlocutor replied simply that 'CHINA had no experience of Sabotage units in Urban Areas'.[75]

Part of the reason for MK's unusual approach was that MK had neither the capacity nor the authorization to undertake immediate guerrilla operations. Mandela and his men lacked experience, training and firepower: at the time of MK's founding, they did not possess a single firearm.[76] Moreover, though Mandela and other founders of MK had concluded that

[72] Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, 2015), 49–57.

[73] Joe Matthews, interview by Phil [Bonner], 18 Aug. 1994, p. 17, B6, Harmel Interviews.

[74] Essop Pahad, 'Dr Y. M. Dadoo: A People's Leader', 1979, pp. 217–18, Item 10.26, Brian Bunting Collection, UWC-Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.

[75] [Arthur Goldreich], '1st Discussion: C. Lee, Ministry of Defence, China', p. 9, Exhibit R4, MS.385/19, Yutar Papers.

[76] Slovo, *Slovo*, 179.

some kind of guerrilla action would ultimately be necessary to achieve the objective of ending apartheid, they recognized that the executives of the ANC and the Congress Alliance had not authorized this at their meetings in June 1961.

Within the constraints imposed by those Congress leaders sceptical of lethal violence, and by the resources available, MK's initial actions could nevertheless have taken several different forms, for in their decisions in 1960–1, the SACP, the ANC and the Congress Alliance had failed to define precisely the specific forms of violence they were authorizing.[77] Sabotage could be 'hot' — defined, in notes Mandela made in this period, as demolition that 'explodes and changes into smoke and fire' — or 'cold' (actions such as putting sugar in petrol tanks, cutting telephone lines and electricity wires or blocking roads with obstacles such as felled trees).[78] It could be directed internally, within the communities the Congress movement regarded as its political constituency (for instance to impede strike-breakers), or externally, against the state or the supporters of apartheid. And externally directed sabotage could be directed either against targets whose destruction would impede economic activity, or against targets whose destruction would symbolize opposition to apartheid. In mid 1961, before the launch of MK, Slovo's SACP squads had started carrying out cold, externally directed economic sabotage, using cutting tools to sever telephone and electricity cables.[79] This was also the kind of activity initially preferred by Denis Goldberg and MK's Regional Command in Cape Town. But there was a general sense, Goldberg recalled, that 'we want big bangs'. The High Command subsequently sent a representative to teach the Regional Command how to make gunpowder.[80]

Some members of MK and the Congress movement who were not on the High Command implied, at the time or subsequently, that MK's initial phase of hot sabotage was launched in order to 'detonate' a revolutionary situation in which guerrilla warfare could be waged effectively. The recent success of the Cuban

[77] Simon Stevens, 'Violence and Political Strategy: The Congress Movement in South Africa in the Early 1960s' (unpublished paper, 2016).

[78] [Nelson Mandela], untitled notes, p. 20, Exhibit R11, MS.385/19, Yutar Papers.

[79] Mandela, jail memoir, 423.

[80] Denis Goldberg, interview by Howard Barrell, 7 Feb. 1990, pp. 194, 202–4, 1/2, Barrell Papers.

Revolution and the writings of Che Guevara had popularized the idea that violent action by small groups could act as a revolutionary 'detonator'.[81] But symbolic urban sabotage bore little resemblance to Guevara's concept of the *foco*, a small band of guerrillas operating in the countryside.[82] When Ronnie Kasrils, a founder member of the MK Regional Command in Durban, pressed his superiors on precisely how they envisaged 'transforming the sabotage actions into guerilla war', he received 'very vague answers' and concluded that 'this had not been worked out'.[83]

The reason for this vagueness was that the form of MK's initial activities was determined less by the perceived relationship of those activities to future guerilla action, and more by the same fears that had gripped many Congress leaders after Sharpeville and that had been such a crucial factor in the decision to form MK in the first place: that grass-roots opponents of apartheid might take matters into their own hands and initiate 'uncontrolled' violence, and that a rival group might outflank the Congress movement by better channelling popular enthusiasm for violent action. Events in 1961–2 made these fears even more acute. The decision to permit the formation of MK had been made in secret. And though he had acquiesced to that decision in June 1961, Lutuli continued to extol publicly the virtues of non-violence in interviews, newspaper columns and public statements.[84] On 10 December 1961, Lutuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his rejection of 'the temptation to use violent means in the struggle for his people'.[85] Some Congress leaders apparently feared that Lutuli's comments and his acceptance of the Peace Prize would reinforce perceptions of the Congress movement as committed to the kind of conciliatory, non-

[81] A. Lerumo [Michael Harmel], 'Forms and Methods of Struggle — The South African Democratic Revolution', *African Communist*, Apr.–May 1962, 51; Ben Turok, interview by David Wiley, 12 May 2006, from 22m 12s, *South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid, Building Democracy*, available at <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/video.php?id=65-24F-22>.

[82] Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*; Matt D. Childs, 'An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's *Foco* Theory', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, xxvii (1995), 593–606.

[83] Ronnie Kasrils, interview by Howard Barrell, Sept. 1990, p. 331, 1/2, Barrell Papers.

[84] Couper, *Albert Luthuli*, 125–40.

[85] Gunnar Jahn, 'Nobel Presentation', in Kader Asmal, David Chidester and Wilmot James (eds.), *South Africa's Nobel Laureates: Peace, Literature, and Science* (Johannesburg, 2004), 20.

confrontational, exclusively non-violent politics with which they believed many opponents of apartheid were now impatient.[86] After touring Africa to secure support for MK during the first half of 1962, Mandela reported back to other Congress leaders that Lutuli's acceptance of the Prize and his 'extremely unfortunate' statements had created the impression that he was a 'stooge of whites'.[87]

While MK was being formed, and the Congress movement's most prominent leader accepted the Nobel Peace Prize and extolled non-violence, rival groups were beginning to initiate violent action. In September and October 1961 the National Committee for Liberation carried out its first acts of sabotage: an arson attack on the Johannesburg Bantu Administration tax office and the toppling of an electricity pylon whose legs NCL members sawed through; the latter caused a forty-five-minute blackout in parts of Johannesburg.[88] Meanwhile, in September 1961 a conference of the regrouped leadership of the PAC formally adopted a strategy of 'armed struggle' that was influenced by 'the philosophy of Mau Mau' and would begin with the terrorization of whites in rural areas.[89] In 1962 Poqo groups, often armed with axes or *pangas* (machetes), began carrying out attacks and assassination attempts. These groups, usually operating autonomously and without explicit direction from the PAC leadership, targeted police, suspected collaborators and, more infrequently, white civilians.[90]

The Congress movement's rivals were also winning external support. The Sharpeville massacre of protesters who had been mobilized by the PAC had catapulted the Pan Africanists into the international limelight and overshadowed the ANC. Tambo reported to other ANC leaders in 1962 that after Sharpeville 'many people outside got the impression that this group [the PAC] was the most militant one and destined to lead the people to freedom'.[91] The external representatives of the ANC and the

[86] Couper, *Albert Luthuli*, 139; [Karis], 'Turn to Violence', 692–3 n. 39.
[87] [Nelson Mandela], 'PAFMECSA', p. 4, Exhibit R13, MS.385/19, Yutar Papers.
[88] Gunther, 'National Committee of Liberation', 198.
[89] Murphy, 'Race, Violence, and Nation', 259–60.
[90] Brown Maaba, 'The PAC's War against the State, 1960–1963', in SADET, *Road to Democracy*, i, *1960–1970*, 240–59.
[91] 'Report on the Lobatsi [*sic*] Conference', [*c.*Nov. 1962], p. 3, 52/2, ANC Lusaka Mission Records, 1923–1996 [Part 2], National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS), University of Fort Hare, Alice.

PAC had agreed in 1960 to co-operate abroad in a 'South African United Front', but by late 1961 this was breaking down. By December that year, Mandela believed it was necessary, he later wrote, to 'boost our reputation in the rest of Africa'. Congress leaders were concerned that African leaders elsewhere on the continent favoured the PAC, with its rhetorical militancy, its anti-communism and its racially exclusive nationalism.[92] They were especially worried about the attitude of the Ghanaian government of Kwame Nkrumah, which had welcomed and assisted PAC officials, but in December 1961 expelled the ANC's representative from the country. Even the NCL was benefiting internationally from its apparent militancy: in April 1961 the Ghanaian government made a substantial grant to a maverick white liberal associated with the NCL, to fund acts of violent resistance.[93]

In light of these various developments, the MK High Command launched its first operations in order to discourage those opposed to apartheid — inside and outside South Africa — from backing the Congress movement's rivals or initiating 'uncontrolled' violence on their own. This objective determined the form of MK's initial actions. It was probably not a coincidence that the nature and targeting of these actions mimicked — on a more spectacular scale — those of the NCL a few weeks earlier. And though there were few international models for a sabotage campaign of this kind, there was a local South African precedent that may have influenced the saboteurs of the NCL and/or MK. In 1941–2, when the founders of the NCL and MK were in their teens or twenties, members of the Ossewabrandwag, a far-right organization of anti-British Afrikaners opposed to the South African government's participation in the Second World War, had used bombs, acid and cutting tools to carry out sabotage attacks on post offices, railway tracks, and telecommunications and power cables and pylons.[94]

[92] Mandela, *Long Walk*, 342; Mandela, jail memoir, 439–40.

[93] Scott Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation: The Foreign Relations of the ANC since 1960* (London, 1996), 28–33; W. Scott Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957–1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, 1969), 222–4; Gunther, 'National Committee of Liberation', 200–3.

[94] George Cloete Visser, *OB: Traitors or Patriots?* (Johannesburg, 1976), 100–6; Christoph Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* (Berlin, 2008), 433–6. Intriguingly, Marx suggests that the Ossewabrandwag's leaders initiated this sabotage campaign as a 'security valve for

(cont. on p. 248)

For the MK High Command, hot sabotage directed at symbolic targets was an attention-grabbing placeholder, to be used until MK had the firepower, the trained men and the sanction of its parent organizations to use more extensive and interpersonal forms of guerrilla violence. As the ANC's 'Sub-Committee on our Perspectives' subsequently noted, MK initially used sabotage 'as a form of demonstration', the purpose of which was 'to announce and effect a break with non-violence'.[95] At the Rivonia Trial, Mandela explained that announcing and effecting such a break served two purposes: first, to 'provide an outlet for those people who were urging the adoption of violent methods', and second, to 'enable us to give concrete proof to our followers that we had adopted a stronger line, and we were fighting back against Government violence'.[96] Concrete proof was also needed to shore up external support: 'The situation was such', Slovo later wrote, 'that without activity of this nature our whole political leadership may have been at stake both inside and outside the country'.[97] The spectacular big bangs brought about by MK were thus intended to produce a psychological effect, not — as its manifesto claimed — amongst the government and its supporters, but amongst opponents of apartheid. Using locally available expertise and materiel, hot sabotage could be carried out immediately in order to neutralize the perceived threats to the Congress movement's leadership and its control of its supporters.

In particular, MK's spectacular attacks on symbols of apartheid were a dramatic alternative to the kinds of indiscriminate and racialized interpersonal violence Congress

(n. 94 cont.)
the taut nerves' of 'wild young men' whom the Ossewabrandwag leadership were 'no longer able to tame'.

[95] 'Report of Sub-Committee on our Perspectives', [*c.*1962–3], p. 1, 53/6, ANC Lusaka Records [Part 2]. The precise status of this committee is unclear. It may have been tasked with producing a report either before or after the ANC's national conference in October 1962.

[96] [Mandela], 'I Am Prepared to Die'.

[97] Joe Slovo, 'The Strategy and Tactics of the Revolution and the Role of the Various National Groups and the Revolutionary Forces in the Revolution', Mar. 1969, pp. 8–9, Item 2.6.5, Dr Yusuf Mohamed Dadoo Personal Papers, Mayibuye Archives.

A revised version of Slovo's paper was formally adopted by the exiled ANC's 1969 national consultative conference at Morogoro, Tanzania: [Consultative Conference of the ANC], 'Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress', *Sechaba: The Official Organ of the African National Congress South Africa*, July 1969.

leaders had long sought to prevent. The sabotage campaign, Slovo later explained, was to be 'a graphic pointer to the need for carefully planned action rather than spontaneous or terroristic acts of retaliation'.[98] In the 1952 Defiance Campaign, Congress leaders had sought to restrict participation in civil disobedience to selected volunteers in order to minimize the likelihood of confrontations escalating out of control and becoming violent. A decade later, MK's commanders adapted this model. Participation in sabotage was restricted to selected volunteers in order to minimize the likelihood that the initiation of violence would escalate beyond their control and become indiscriminate.[99]

The High Command thus sought, Sisulu later explained, to 'prevent groups coming up suddenly as sabotage groups unplanned', in order to avoid a situation in which 'people get wild'.[100] Carried out by unknown operatives using home-made explosives to which most black South Africans did not have access, MK's first actions were deliberately non-replicable. Drawing upon the polemics against 'terrorism' and 'propaganda of the deed' by Marx and Lenin, some internal Congress critics — such as the maverick white communist Rowley Arenstein — argued that the 'adventurism' and 'terrorism' of MK's 'turn to using firecrackers' would not work because it would fail to detonate popular political activity: 'the people do not learn anything from the activities of the saboteurs, cannot be inspired by them, and cannot help them'.[101] But this was a feature, not a bug. The immediate objective of the MK High Command was to use spectacle, not to detonate popular violence, but to defuse it.

[98] Slovo, 'South Africa — No Middle Road', 186.

[99] Archie Sibeko, interview by B. Turok, 13 Sept. 1971, p. 6, ICS143/3/90, Turok Papers. See also Brown, 'Public Protest and Violence', 107–9, 118–22.

[100] Sisulu, interview by Bonner, 15 July 1993, 24.

[101] [Rowley Arenstein], 'The Immediate Tasks of the National Liberation Movement: Cause for Alarm', A8.2b, State vs. David Ernst, Rowley Israel Arenstein and Joseph Finkelstein, Trial Records, WHP; Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom* (Auckland Park, 2013), 26–7.

IV

AFTERMATH

Within a year of MK's launch, Congress leaders believed that the objectives of its campaign of spectacular symbolic sabotage had been attained. 'The purpose for which [sabotage] was originally embarked upon was to announce and effect a break with non-violence', reported the ANC's 'Sub-Committee on our Perspectives' in mid-to-late 1962 or early 1963. 'That purpose has now been achieved'.[102] Though both the NCL and Poqo continued their attacks in 1962–3, neither group eclipsed the Congress movement. Supporters like Zuma, who had been impatient with non-violence, were recruited into MK and given an outlet for their impatience: some participated in sabotage operations, while others were sent abroad for military training. Outside the country, the PAC's momentum was stemmed. Though the Ghanaian government continued to cold-shoulder the ANC in favour of the PAC, other independent African governments took a more even-handed approach to the rival movements. Tambo reported in October 1962 that the '[international] situation had developed very favourably towards us' and the impression elsewhere in Africa that the PAC was 'most militant' had 'cleared'. This was, Tambo stressed, 'mainly due to the increased activity of our movement inside South Africa itself' — in other words, MK's campaign of big bangs.[103]

The Congress movement paid a high price for the achievement of these objectives, however. The Sub-Committee on our Perspectives observed that sabotage 'in the form in which we employed it in the past' — as a spectacular demonstration — 'has cost us a great deal'.[104] Congress leaders had not formed MK out of any belief that there had been a fundamental alteration in the character of the state in 1960–1. But the launch of MK's sabotage campaign did subsequently help precipitate fundamental alterations in the state's repressive capacity. In 1962–3 the government responded to MK's attacks (as well as those of the NCL and Poqo) by massively increasing spending on the police and military, and expanding police powers

[102] 'Report of Sub-Committee on our Perspectives', 1.
[103] 'Report on the Lobatsi Conference', 3.
[104] 'Report of Sub-Committee on our Perspectives', 1.

of 'banning', house arrest and detention without charge. Police use of torture became widespread.

Perhaps because the audience they had intended to influence with their sabotage campaign consisted of opponents of apartheid, not the government and its supporters, MK's founders failed to anticipate the ferocity of the government's reaction to activity that was, in their eyes, a strictly limited alternative to the indiscriminate violence they sought to pre-empt. 'We did not sufficiently realise that the beginnings of armed struggle would lead to the very steps which the enemy took', Slovo later conceded.[105] The massive intensification of repression quickly took a toll on MK and the Congress movement. In August 1962, Mandela was caught and imprisoned. In July 1963, police raided MK's de facto headquarters in the Johannesburg suburb of Rivonia and captured Congress leaders including Sisulu, Mbeki and Mhlaba, all members of MK's High Command. By the time of the subsequent Rivonia Trial, Mandela later observed, 'acts of sabotage were fizzling out mainly because the enemy had struck hard at MK and reduced it to a mere shadow of itself'.[106]

The sabotage campaign cost the Congress movement in other ways as well. Though sabotage had been intended only as a stopgap activity, it monopolized the attention of MK's commanders and those they recruited as saboteurs. Slovo later reflected that 'the energies and resources devoted to the planning and execution of acts of sabotage and to the military apparatus (and all its auxiliary requirements) began to affect the pace of political work amongst the people'.[107] When they authorized the formation of MK, the constituent bodies of the Congress movement had agreed that violent action would not be the centrepiece of the Congress movement's activity, but rather a complement to continued non-violent campaigns.[108] But with the attention of the most active Congress leaders focused exclusively on the bombing campaign, the ANC and its allies were not organizing any major actions other than spectacular sabotage.

[105] Slovo, 'Sabotage Campaign', 25.
[106] Mandela, jail memoir, 587.
[107] Slovo, 'South Africa — No Middle Road', 192.
[108] Stevens, 'Violence and Political Strategy'.

Ben Turok, a white communist who participated in MK's first attempted bombings in Johannesburg, later echoed contemporary critics like Arenstein, pointing out that because bomb attacks required access to technical equipment and expertise, 'sabotage remained the weapon of an *elite* corps in the liberation movement' and 'had the effect of isolating the organized movement from the mass who felt unable to join in this new phase'. Turok concluded, in a sentence often quoted in subsequent scholarly assessments, that '*the sabotage campaign failed on the main count — it did not raise the level of action of the masses themselves*'.[109] As we have seen, this defusing effect was intentional: MK's campaign of 'controlled violence' was intended to discourage opponents of apartheid from participating in 'uncontrolled' violent activity. But in the absence of any other major Congress campaigns for supporters to engage in, the effect was to reduce all popular political participation. This was quickly recognized: reflecting on the first months of the sabotage campaign, the ANC's Sub-Committee on our Perspectives warned of the danger of creating 'the false impression that the masses of the people can now sit back and watch and leave the struggle to a few unknown, daring and gallant saboteurs'.[110]

Congress leaders thus quickly concluded that the sabotage campaign had achieved its original objectives while also imposing unexpectedly heavy costs on their movement. Given this, most active Congress leaders had agreed by mid 1962 that MK should move on to the next phase of its operations. 'No further purpose is served by using sabotage as a form of demonstration', insisted the Sub-Committee on our Perspectives. The nature and purpose of continued sabotage should shift, the committee argued: sabotage should now be used in the way prescribed by Guevara in his treatise on guerrilla warfare, as 'an auxilliary [*sic*] to other forms of military action against an enemy', a means of 'weakening and hampering the [enemy's] war effort and reducing its fighting potential in resisting the transfer of political power'.[111] In October 1962, the ANC's first national conference since the organization's

[109] Ben Turok, *Strategic Problems in South Africa's Liberation Struggle: A Critical Analysis* (Richmond, British Columbia, 1974), 45. Italics in original.

[110] 'Report of Sub-Committee on our Perspectives', 1.

[111] 'Report of Sub-Committee on our Perspectives', 1.

banning explicitly endorsed the position Mandela and Slovo had held since MK was launched: it characterized the sabotage campaign as MK's 'elementary phase' and looked ahead to 'the advanced stage of guerrilla warfare'.[112]

But MK found itself unable to move beyond its 'elementary phase'. In the course of 1962 and 1963, MK did increase bombing of economic targets such as electricity pylons and sub-stations, telephone lines and exchanges and railway tracks, in addition to symbolic targets associated with the implementation of apartheid. But there was continuing confusion about target selection and purpose: Goldberg later commented that 'we talked about armed sabotage against symbols of Apartheid, and at the same time we were talking economic sabotage, and we seemed to waver in between all these sorts'.[113] Though MK's commanders understood economic sabotage to be ancillary to guerrilla warfare, no guerrilla action was launched. The founders of MK had been bounced into launching the sabotage campaign by pressure from below and the actions of their rivals. Though most agreed from the start that spectacular sabotage was a necessary placeholder until they could launch some form of guerrilla activity, there was no agreement within the Congress leadership on what form that activity should take. Like sabotage, guerrilla action could take different forms and be used for different purposes. Congress leaders were still furiously debating the form and purpose of MK's 'advanced stage' when their deliberations were interrupted by the police raid on Rivonia.[114]

By the time of the Rivonia Trial, some Congress leaders had concluded that the sabotage campaign should be halted until the commencement of whatever form of guerrilla action was ultimately agreed upon. Continuing to carry out 'mere acts of sabotage unaccompanied by armed struggle . . . before the actual commencement of g[uer]rilla warfare', some argued, 'merely exposed our people to the enemy withou[t] equip[p]ing themselves with the weapons for their defence'. But at the same time, the government's crippling response to MK's first actions created a new rationale for the continuation of the sabotage

[112] ANC National Executive, 'The People Accept the Challenge', 749.
[113] Goldberg, interview by Sampson, 29.
[114] Stevens, 'Violence and Political Strategy'.

campaign.[115] At its first meeting after the Rivonia raid, MK's reconstituted 'Second High Command' agreed, one member later testified, 'that sabotage should be committed to give the impression that M.K. was still alive'.[116] Originally initiated to demonstrate to opponents of apartheid that the Congress movement had responded to popular pressure to abandon exclusive non-violence, sabotage was now continued in order to demonstrate to the same audience that the movement had not been destroyed by the government's reaction.

However, MK proved unable to sustain the sabotage campaign. Having observed a moratorium on sabotage during the Rivonia Trial to avoid prejudicing the trial's outcome, members of the Second High Command were themselves arrested within four months of the relaunch of the campaign in June 1964. Leadership of the Congress movement subsequently devolved to those who had left the country: exiled Congress leaders unexpectedly found themselves in command of the several hundred MK recruits who had been sent abroad for guerrilla training and then been unable to return home. The ANC's exiled leadership formally decided, as a report by the Liberation Committee of the Organisation of African Unity later summarized, 'to suspend acts of sabotage inside South Africa until such a time that its cadres are in a position to counter any resultant retaliatory measures or acts of terrorism which such a method of warfare could instigate or invite upon the African population from the South African forces'.[117] For the next decade, the ANC's exiled leaders instead focused their attention on almost entirely unsuccessful efforts to re-infiltrate their trained guerrillas into the country.

In retrospect, Slovo always insisted that MK's sabotage campaign had been necessary. Had the Congress movement failed to take any kind of violent action at that moment, he argued, 'it would have disappeared as a viable agency for change'.[118] And if that had happened, many Congress leaders

[115] Mandela, jail memoir, 587.

[116] 'I. D. Kitson (Accused No. 2)', in 'Record of Proceedings', 18 Nov. 1964, p. 83, File 2, Records of the Trial [of] Mkwayi, W., and Others, WHP.

[117] Organisation of African Unity, Co-Ordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, 'Executive Secretary's Brief', 30 Apr. 1968, p. 7, FA 1/1/261, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Records, National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka.

[118] Slovo, 'South Africa — No Middle Road', 196.

believed, the consequences would have been disastrous not only for the Congress movement but for South Africa. At the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the Rivonia raid, South Africa's then president, Jacob Zuma argued that 'tragedy could have happened if MK [was] not there to channel energy away' from indiscriminate violence.[119] Certainly, the survival of the Congress movement — and of its commitment to avoiding extensive violence against civilians — was not inevitable. But it is more open to question whether the movement's continued existence as a viable agency for change was assisted or impeded by the particular form of violence chosen by the MK High Command in 1961. Launched precipitously as a stopgap measure to shore up support, MK's 'first phase' of spectacular sabotage contributed to creating conditions in which for years afterwards the Congress movement inside South Africa was unable to initiate any large-scale violent or non-violent action against apartheid.

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[119] Carien du Plessis (@carienduplessis), Twitter post, 11 July 2013, 9.11 p.m., <https://twitter.com/carienduplessis/status/355403914285285376>.