

Mandela's Legacy: A Man of Many Parts

Nelson Mandela – whose followers and admirers often referred to by his clan name, Madiba – passed away on 5 December 2013, at age 95. He was undoubtedly one of the most inspirational figures in the period since World War II: A humane visionary with exemplary courage, gentle but firm in his dealings and demeanour, proud in the face of racist humiliations, with monumental patience and indomitable revolutionary will to liberate himself and his people from the Apartheid system into which he was born. Dismantling Apartheid in the 1990s was one of the great events of the turbulent twentieth century, even though the manner of its dismantling was deeply marred by the fact that the critical negotiations which made it possible came in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. And, in a significant coincidence, those negotiations on the issue of South African settler colonialism ran parallel to those other negotiations, on Israeli settler colonialism, which led to the Oslo Accords. Mandela and Arafat had more in common than easily meets the eye. Both were revolutionaries in non-revolutionary times, and both fought first with the gun, then offered an olive branch to their oppressors, in search of dignified peace between very unequal antagonists. In both cases, the question was starkly posed: is Dignity possible with Inequality?

Mandela was a man of many parts; a man for all seasons as it were. His political career began in the 1940s, with demands for quite modest reform that fell far short of racial equality but sought to protect the professional and entrepreneurial interests of the black middle class. The demands were radicalized by government refusal. The more the apartheid government refused, the more radical the demands became, eventually culminating in a commitment to armed struggle and the founding of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK, in short form; and translated as 'Spear of the Nation'), the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) which carried out its first guerrilla action in the last days of 1961. In this phase of his life he is said to have been inspired by Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. He received military training in

Aijaz Ahmad
Nehru Memorial Museum
and Library, New Delhi

Morocco and Ethiopia during the summer of 1962 but was then arrested on 5 August 1962, soon after his return to South Africa. He renounced use of armed struggle only in 1993 but there is no evidence that he actually ever participated in it. For, having been arrested in 1962, he was to be released from prison only in February 1990, well after he had initiated negotiations with the white settler government for peace, reconciliation and abrogation of apartheid rule. By the time those negotiations were concluded and he became the first President of post-Apartheid South Africa in May 1994, he was being widely portrayed as a man of peace and non-violence in the mould of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King.

Nelson Mandela's relationship with communism has never been very clear. We know that as early as 1955 Mandela advised Sisulu, his senior in ANC, to seek weapons from the People's Republic of China. We also know that Mandela was a key figure in ANC's recourse to armed struggle and that the armed wing of the ANC was established in 1961 with the active participation of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) which always remained at the centre of that armed wing. Immediately after his death, SACP deputy general secretary Solly Mapaila claimed that Mandela was a long-time member of the party and that it was denied in the past for 'political reasons'; the party's lengthier statement went on to say that '...At his arrest in August 1962, Nelson Mandela was not only a member of the then underground South African Communist Party, but was also a member of our party's central committee.'

The difficulty, however, is that Mandela himself always denied that he ever had any such relationship with communism, or held convictions of that kind. More recently, Ronnie, a longtime senior member of both the ANC and the SACP,

has also denied that Mandela was ever a member of the latter; 'I would have known,' he remarked. During the Rivonia trial after his arrest, at the height of his political radicalism, Mandela emphatically claimed that the Freedom Charter, the key programmatic document of the ANC, was 'by no means a blueprint for a socialist state' and that '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'. In his autobiography, *Long March to Freedom*, published more than two decades later (1994), just as he was ascending to the South African presidency, Mandela was to write: 'There will always be those who say that the communists were using us. But who is to say that we were not using them?' That's just about right: 'using them'. The ANC was a conservative force when Mandela first joined and even after the radical turn that Mandela and his close associates introduced into its politics, it remained a small party based primarily in the frustrated black middle class. Origins of the alliance with the communists were purely pragmatic. As Charles Longford was to write after Mandela's death:

As an insignificant political force, removed from the black working classes and the poor, ANC stood little chance of generating any meaningful political pressure that might affect change. They needed the black majority. That is why they turned to the South African Communist Party.

The first phase of Mandela's political activism, before he was sent to prison, in 1962, was the time of high tide for socialist, anti-colonial and generally revolutionary movements all over the globe, so that an alliance between nationalists and communists was by no means odd or exceptional. It was during that time that socialist revolutions swept through China and Cuba; the two great European empires, the British and the French, were dissolved; revolutionary wars broke out in Korea, Vietnam, Algeria and elsewhere; the Non-Aligned Movement arose as a significant force in global affairs. Liberation was the watchword of the times

and Mandela was at the time ideologically comfortable in that world. By the time he came out of incarceration in 1990, the Chinese counterrevolution had been in power for over a decade; the Soviet Union was in the process of fragmentation; European social democracy was succumbing to neoliberalism; Arab secular nationalism had been defeated; and radical nationalist regimes across Asia and Africa had become mere caricatures of themselves. Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister of India when Mandela was sent to prison; by the time he came out, even Indira Gandhi was dead and India was experiencing the very first wave of its neoliberal transformations. Capitalism was triumphant across the globe, and the world to which Mandela returned was not even remotely the world he had left behind. He took the measure of the changes and changed himself accordingly.

Nelson Mandela shall always be remembered, for centuries to come, as the noblest, the most formidable among those who led South Africa out of the apartheid nightmare. He shall be remembered even more as the man who refused to fight white racism with the weapon of black racism, or to forge a majoritarian racism against the racial minority – the racism of the victor against the racism of the vanquished. For him, being African was a matter not of race but of trans-racial belonging in which whites and blacks could share equally, if racial privilege was abolished. All through his own sufferings, and the sufferings of his people he held fast to the universalist belief in the equality of all human beings, beyond race, religion or nationality. This universalist belief was there not only in the moment of his triumph during the 1990s but from the earliest days of his victimization by the apartheid regime. Facing the death penalty during the Rivonia Trial, he spoke eloquently of the Equality he envisaged as normative moral value for all humanity at the end of his speech in court, on 20 April 1964:

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 achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

In different circumstances, such words could perhaps be treated as the expression of a familiar kind of liberal conscience. In the concrete circumstance of a black prisoner facing an all-white court in apartheid South Africa, under threat of death, those same words come to command a very different kind of majesty and heroic resonance. In the event, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, of which he actually served twenty-seven years. The fundamental moral grandeur of Nelson Mandela resides in that universalist vision in the midst of a racist society.

By the time he passed away, his fame had reached mythic proportions. For all the years when he was the acknowledged supreme leader of the anti-Apartheid movement, even through all those twenty-seven prison years, western governments and media corporations routinely called him a ‘terrorist’, ‘communist’, ‘dangerous Marxist revolutionary’ etc. However, once he started negotiations with the white regime during the 1980s, though still inside the prison, those same governments and corporations took to bestowing more and more international stature upon him. Those negotiations were held against the specific backdrop of the Tripartite Accord that was reached between Cuba, Angola and South Africa built upon undertakings whereby 50,000 Cuban soldiers withdrew from Angola in exchange for the independence of Namibia and South Africa’s commitment to stop the over and covert wars that were destabilizing neighbouring countries. It took another year and two months of negotiations after that agreement for Mandela to be released.

Thanks to the progress towards reconciliation during those negotiations, he was released from prison in 1990, a framework for the protection of white interests in wealth and property was put in place, the whole system of racist laws was abolished, democratic elections were held, and Mandela assumed the Presidency of South Africa in May 1994. By the time he relinquished the presidency in June 1999, first-rate sainthood had been bestowed upon him, pretty much on the model of Mahatma Gandhi. Mercifully, Mandela himself had a sense of wry humour about it. When John Pilger, the well-known journalist, asked him about this elevation to sainthood, Mandela replied: ‘That’s not the job I applied for.’

It is difficult to imagine another figure who has received so many public honours from all corners of the globe, over 260 in all, including the Nobel Prize, the Bharat Ratna, the Nishan-e-Pakistan, the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Order of Lenin from the erstwhile Soviet Union. That he would receive the US Presidential Medal in 2002 is ironic considering that his name was eventually removed from the State Department’s list of ‘terrorists’ only in 2008, six years after he had received that Medal. Mandela had, of course, addressed the joint houses of the US Congress well before that, twice: in 1990, soon after being released from prison, and again in 1994, upon assuming the South African Presidency. Only in the American scheme of things is it possible to bestow upon someone the highest honour that the US can give to anyone but also keep the same person on the list of ‘terrorists’ – just in case!

Thatcher and Reagan – not to speak of the *New York Times* – used to refer to Mandela as a ‘terrorist’ well into the 1980s. By the end of that decade he was being invited to address the US Congress, a rare event for anyone but especially one who was not a head of state or an international dignitary. What had changed by then? The common answer would be: Mandela’s moral stature was such that even the US government had been forced to recognize it. There is undoubtedly some truth in that, but things might be more complex. Another way of putting it is like this: Mandela received the Order of Lenin in 1990, the last recipient before the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, and the US began showering honours on him that same year. Is there any significance to this historical coincidence? Or, we may recall that Mandela relinquished the Presidency in 1999 and, only two years later, in 2001, George Soros was to tell the Davos Economic Forum, ‘South Africa is in the hands of international capital.’ When, precisely, did post-Apartheid South Africa fall into those hands: after 1999 or before?

II

Nelson Mandela was born to a royal family in Transkei and therefore took elite privilege and high status for granted. He trained as a lawyer and did not finish a degree but obtained a diploma that allowed him to practice. He fled home to avoid a traditional arranged marriage, and moved to Johannesburg where he set up

South Africa's first black law firm in 1952, together with his friend Oliver Tambo, who later became president of the ANC. (Mandela himself became ANC President in 1991 when Tambo relinquished that office due to failing health.) The government banned him for the first time that same year. He spent the next ten years between prison and the revolutionary underground. When the ANC's famous Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955 he watched the proceedings secretly from the sidelines.

Mandela was arrested and imprisoned on 5 December 1955, exactly 48 years before his death, and appeared, in a long list of 156 detainees, as one of the main accused in the infamous Treason Trial that began in 1956 and ended only in 1961 when he was acquitted, along with the last thirty of the one hundred and fifty-six. Defendants in the trial included key figures of the ANC and the CPSA, whose names would haunt the history of Apartheid thereafter: Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, Ahmed Kathrada, Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Lionel Bernstein, Alex La Guma, Lionel Foreman and many others.

While Mandela was still fighting his case in the Treason Trial, a state of emergency was declared and the ANC was banned after the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, so that he was again among those who were detained under the Emergency as well. After his acquittal in March 1961 he went underground. By June of that year he got involved in organizing the armed struggle. In January 1962 he secretly left South Africa, travelling to a number of African countries, including Morocco and Ethiopia, where he received military training, as well as the UK. Upon his return he was again arrested, never to leave prison for the next twenty-seven years and spending eighteen of those years, 1964 to 1982, at Robben Island, a little patch of land off the South African Coast, which had once served as a leper colony, then alternately as prison or as naval base, and then, from 1961 onwards, as a high security detention centre for leaders and activists of the ANC – Mandela, Sisulu, Zuma and others – where communications with the rest of the world were cut.

We might add that Oliver Tambo was released early for lack of evidence and immediately went into exile, settling in

London from where he supervised the activities of the ANC and its solidarity networks – most importantly, the formation of the South African Democratic Front – as the organization's General-Secretary, then Deputy President, Acting President, and finally its President from 1967 onwards, until Mandela himself took over the office in 1991. Tambo was not to return to South Africa until 1990. Thabo Mbeki, who served as Mandela's Vice President after the end of Apartheid and then succeeded him as President, similarly went into exile in 1962 and returned in 1990. Jacob Zuma, the current President who succeeded Mbeki, went into exile later, in 1975, but also returned in 1990 together with all the other exiled leaders when the ANC was unbanned and Mandela released to pave the way for a post-Apartheid settlement. The subsequent trajectory of South Africa seems to have been profoundly shaped by the fact that most of the ANC leaders, some of whom were also important members of the SACP (Mbeki was member of the central committee; Jacob Zuma joined in 1963 and was elected to the Politburo in 1989), spent virtually the whole period of the revolutionary struggle either in prison (such as Mandela and Sisulu) or in exile (most of the others).

Some of these exiles, such as Tambo, were stationed primarily in western capitals. Some, such as Mbeki, criss-crossed between Western locations and the African countries bordering South Africa – Mozambique, Angola, Namibia – where ANC officials as well as the fighters of both the CPSA and ANC were stationed, not only to infiltrate South Africa but also to participate in anti-colonial warfare in those countries; in Angola, for instance, South African partisans fought alongside militants of the MPLA and the Cuban armed units. Some others, such as Zuma, were concentrated mainly in those neighbouring countries and, often, their battlefields. Inside the country, the famous leaders such as Mandela and Sisulu, were held incommunicado in high-security prisons and had no contact with the movement and its militants, whether inside the country or in exile, for roughly the two decades when anti-apartheid struggles, including the armed struggle, were at their most intense.

Thus, the armed struggle was often led not by ANC cadres, strictly speaking, but by communists, such as Joe Slovo and

Chris Hani (who of course also participated in ANC activities). Moreover, armed struggle in all of Southern Africa, as in many other liberation movements from Vietnam to Palestine, was highly dependent on the socialist bloc for arms, training etc, and was thus much less an effect of the ANC alone. The revolution, however, was less the work of armed units, but more of the black working classes and poor masses. Those incessant uprisings and mass actions in the black townships and the hinterland were the combined work of the Democratic Front which brought together over 400 organizations, including the CP and ANC undergrounds, as well as the Black Consciousness Movement of Steve Biko which often seemed to overshadow the ANC as such. Thus, while some of the key leaders were physically safe either in prison or in exile, at varying distances from the scenes of fighting, some of the most heroic and promising leaders were killed in battle or fell to assassins' bullets, most notably Chris Hani, an illustrious communist and the key leader of the armed struggle. His assassination in 1993, on the eve of the accord between Mandela and de Klerk, was a key event because Hani had incorruptible revolutionary zeal and influence and charisma second only to Mandela's. Hani was expected to lead the struggle against the kind of South Africa that emerged after those accords.

In this respect, the situation in South Africa was somewhat reminiscent of the Algerian Revolution. Leaders like Ben Bella (the first post-revolutionary president) were captured early and came out of prison with unsullied reputations of legendary proportion; they could negotiate away anything and yet be held in highest esteem. Other men, like Boumedienne (the second president), stayed put in neighbouring Tunisia and rose to political power after the French withdrawal on the strength of the Army of the Exterior that had remained intact, in command of men and materials, while those who fought the bitterest battles on Algerian soil were largely decimated. In South Africa, the accord was negotiated by Mandela, the famous prisoner with matchless moral authority; other leaders then returned from exile to take charge of the state that had been transformed by the blood of others.

The significant parallel is with the contrast between the originating aspirations of the

two movements and the post-revolutionary outcomes. In Algeria, the famous Tripoli Programme was promulgated virtually at the end of the war of Independence, in June 1962, in the very last meeting of the leadership of the National Liberation Front (FLN) before the factional conflicts of that summer broke out. The programme was chiefly the work of Redha Malek, Mohamed Bedjaoui, and Mohamed Benyahia, and proposed a 'socialist option' for Algeria's development. It envisioned the nationalization of foreign interests, the inauguration of agricultural cooperatives and an industrial economy largely in the state sector. The programme viewed the recently signed Evian Accords with France as neocolonialist because the accords guaranteed the French colons their full property rights and included an article which stated that 'Algeria concedes to France the use of certain air bases, terrains, sites and military installations which are necessary to it.' The agreement specifically permitted France to maintain its naval facilities at Mers El Kébir (which also had an underground nuclear facility) for another fifteen years. So, the description of the Accords as 'neocolonialist' was apt, even though two of the main movers of the Tripoli Programme were members of the Algerian delegation that had signed the Evian Accords; they had obviously been overruled by the majority in the delegation led by Krim Belkacem (who was to be later accused of ordering the murder of Abbane Ramadane, the legendary leader and moving spirit behind the Soummam Congress which had given to the FLN its basic contours). With a leadership so divided, it is no wonder that even more murderous disputes broke out among factional groupings soon thereafter. In any case, the relevant fact is that French capital re-entered Algeria on an increasingly elaborate scale while government of the FLN kept degenerating into a spectacularly corrupt and authoritarian bureaucracy, which is what it is to this day.

The career of the ANC as it started inching toward power, and especially after it formed the government, has not been notably different – in fact, may have been much worse in most respects.

III

In January 1990, as he was emerging from prison and the ban on ANC was getting

lifted, Mandela wrote to the Mass Democratic Movement, in words reminiscent of the promises of the Tripoli Programme:

The nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly industries is the policy of the ANC, and a change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable. Black economic empowerment is a goal we fully support and encourage, but in our situation state control of certain sectors of the economy is unavoidable.

On 11 July 2013, John Pilger published a piece on his interview with Mandela after the ANC had taken hold of power, had abandoned the black working classes and the poor to their fate, and launched a wave of brisk privatizations and deregulations, which led, among other things, to fabulous enrichment of the new ANC elite, Mandela's close associates and cabinet ministers in particular. Pilger reports that when he said to Mandela that it was all contrary to what he had said in 1990, the latter shrugged him off with the remark 'for this country, privatization is the fundamental policy'. Not only that! Mandela was frequently seen in the company of the most corrupt of his ministers even after he relinquished power and in fact supported Zuma's bid for the presidency. In power, Zuma, himself a former communist leader, acted very much like the Russian oligarchs bred by Yeltsin. Typical among those companions of Mandela was Cyril Ramaphosa, a former mine workers' union leader, a deputy president of the ANC (and presidential contender), who became a billionaire board member of the corporation that owns the Marikana mine where South African police shot down 34 striking Black miners in cold blood in August, 2012. Mandela himself was not corrupt in that sense, but favours that wealthy businessmen did to him in such matters as building of his post-retirement home are well known.

All that was more or less written into the kind of transition that was made when the key apartheid structures were abolished. The agreement which ended apartheid and established majority rule based on universal suffrage also allowed whites to keep the best land, the mines, manufacturing plants, and financial institutions, and to export vast quantities of their wealth without restriction. Eighty per cent of the privately owned land in the country

is still in the hands of the whites, down from eighty seven percent under apartheid. A South African communist told me in the late 1990s while Mandela was president: 'we now run the economy they own'. In state policy, the neoliberal turn that had been initiated by the apartheid regime in its latter years was to be extended greatly under ANC rule. Thabo Mbeki – once a member of the central committee of the CPSA – trained in Economics in England and in guerrilla warfare in the Soviet Union. He was an eminent leader of the ANC who criss-crossed continents during the 1970s and 1980s to connect the exiled political leadership with the externally based military units. As vice president under Mandela and President of South Africa after him, he could, in the fullness of time, gleefully say, 'Just call me a Thatcherite.' It was all a bit like Oslo and the career of the PA thereafter. Self-enrichment is at the heart of all the varieties of Thatcherism. Or, as Deng Xiaoping famously said: 'It is glorious to be rich.' Today's South Africa is part of the global counter-revolution.

The white ruling elite had prepared for such outcomes with great deliberation. It had methodically nurtured a new Black entrepreneurial and professional class through loans, subsidies etc, whose interests predictably came into conflict with those of the black working classes and the poor who were the mass base of the anti-Apartheid struggle in all its aspects. Like any typical national bourgeoisie in postcolonial Africa and Asia, members of this newly confected class aspired to little more than becoming intermediaries between global capital and the national market. Meanwhile, the famous 'talks about talks' began with Mandela soon after he was moved from Robben Island to Pollsmoor prison in 1982, where he could receive guests who included many luminaries from the regime, including such figures as Neil Bernard, director of the National Intelligence Agency. Seven years were to elapse before this process of reconciliation was to progress sufficiently for Mandela to be meeting, secretly and still as a prisoner, with the white minority President, De Klerk. The following year, he was released from detention altogether.

White South African mining magnates, billionaires and businessmen were meanwhile meeting the exiled leaders of the ANC, such as Mbeki, in European capitals, to offer deals and hammer out

the economic structure of post-Apartheid South Africa; a favourite meeting place was a majestic mansion, Mells Park House, near Bath, in England. The IMF backed up the effort with the offer of a loan in 1993 and US-trained ANC economists were soon to huddle together with World Bank officials to map out detailed blueprints for a neoliberal, crony-capitalist future. Those leaders of the ANC who had spent long years in neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe and Zambia had internalized the corrupt ways and authoritarian personality traits typical of the elites in those countries. It was in the interest of the white minority that owed most of the wealth even in the new South Africa to integrate a section of the ANC elite into the capitalist class so that they too would act in the interest of the class as a whole.

Equally disastrous was the disarray in communist ranks in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. Mandela might or might not have been a member of the CPSA, but we do know that Mbeki and Zuma – the second and third presidents of South Africa whose corruptions became the stuff of legend – were high-ranking members in the party's executive bodies. Not only that. In precisely the period following the dismantling of Apartheid, when South Africa needed massive construction of public housing for the black working classes and the poor who had been condemned to segregated housing in the shanty towns – for the very people, in other words, who had actually made the revolution – the privatization of housing was supervised by none other than Joe Slovo, the chair of the CPSA and famous leader of the armed struggle, who was now looking to the World Bank for advice.

Ronnie Kasrils – member of the national executive committee of the ANC from 1987-2007 and, concurrently a member of the central committee of the CPSA from December 1986 to 2007 – published a damning and self-damning piece on this subject in *The Guardian* of 24 June 2013, entitled, 'How the ANC's Faustian pact sold out South Africa's poor'. Kasrils would know. After the 1994 elections, he became a Deputy Minister of Defence for five years, then Minister of Water Affairs for the next five, and then Minister of Intelligence for four more years until he resigned. He was thus a Minister throughout the successive presidencies

of Mandela and Mbeki. Here is a longish quotation from that article:

What I call our Faustian moment came when we took an IMF loan on the eve of our first democratic election. . . . Doubt had come to reign supreme: we believed, wrongly, that there was no other option; that we had to be cautious, since by 1991 our once powerful ally, the Soviet Union, bankrupted by the arms race, had collapsed. Inexcusably, we had lost faith in the ability of our own revolutionary masses to overcome all obstacles. . . by late 1993 big business strategies – hatched in 1991 at the mining mogul Harry Oppenheimer's Johannesburg residence – were crystallising in secret late-night discussions at the Development Bank of South Africa. Present were South Africa's mineral and energy leaders, the bosses of US and British companies with a presence in South Africa – and young ANC economists schooled in western economics. They were reporting to Mandela. An ANC-Communist party leadership eager to assume political office (myself no less than others) readily accepted this devil's pact, only to be damned in the process.

IV

Mandela was an amalgam of moral courage and universalist convictions in his social vision, and of increasingly capitalist, even neoliberal convictions in matters of political economy as well as a peculiarly advanced toleration for the corruption of his colleagues.

One is reminded, then, of Marx's double-edged dictum: 'men make their own history but only in circumstances given to them'. When Mandela first joined the ANC it was an ineffectual, conservative platform meant to plead for minor concessions from the whites-only regime. He and his close comrades – Sisulu, Tambo and others – turned it into a fighting outfit for radical demands of racial equality. They soon made a close alliance with the Communist Party and organized an armed struggle that shook not only the regime but also the neighboring countries and their colonial masters. Armed struggle in South Africa preceded and then was inextricably linked to armed struggles in Namibia, the Portuguese colonies and Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe). Mandela had played a crucial role in initiating the ANC into that armed

struggle, was then imprisoned well before he could himself play any substantial or coherent role in that struggle, and yet, as the country's most famous prisoner, he came to symbolize almost the totality of southern African struggles.

The Freedom Charter of 1955 can be considered as the key document of the re-founding of ANC on new premises and it was under the influence of Mandela and his like-minded comrades that the Charter went on to specify that a democratic South Africa, liberated from the scourge of apartheid, would be a country not of whites only or blacks only but of all those who reside in it, regardless of racial origin. This universalist humanism was the hallmark of the vision that he sought to realize through a revolutionary movement. He never shirked from the necessity of armed struggle when no other option was available but he always insisted that armed struggle was a strategy of last resort that was thrust upon him and his comrades by oppressors whereas he much preferred a negotiated settlement.

It is certainly true that he was in prison through virtually the whole period of the mortal struggle between the forces of apartheid and the forces of liberation which unfolded through the quarter century of his incarceration. In that sense, he became more a symbol of that resistance than an active leader or combatant in the field of battle, and then came out of prison only when a negotiated settlement was at hand. However, three things need to be added immediately. First, not even that long period of incarceration could dent, let alone kill, his indomitable spirit. His resolve remained the same, as did his commitment to humanist values beyond racial or personal hatreds. Second, his stature was such that when a final settlement was to be made, none other – not the senior leaders in exile, nor leaders and commanders stationed in neighbouring countries – could be the final negotiator with the opposing apartheid regime. Mandela alone retained that authority to represent Black South Africa as a whole. Transition to post-Apartheid peace would come with his consent, or peace would not come. This unrivalled authority, of course, implies a unique responsibility for what followed. Third, in his generous acknowledgement of those who had actively supported the people of South Africa he was fearless of, and impervious

to, the effect his open expressions of gratitude would have on his enemies.

During his trip to the US in 1990, soon after getting released from prison, he was eloquent in his praise for Fidel, Arafat, and Qaddafi whom he called his 'comrades-in-arm'. Knowing how the term 'human rights' was being used by the US in its pursuit of imperialist power, Mandela deliberately said of those three that, 'There is no reason whatsoever why we should have any hesitation about hailing their commitment to human rights.' He thus made an important point. Open, even armed support for the struggle of the South African people was one of the prime touchstones of how much one cared for human rights in the true sense of the word, and western powers had punctually failed that test. He went personally to Cuba to thank the Cuban people for their support and for the fact that Cubans had fought and died side by side with Africans to destroy the racist and colonial regimes in half a dozen countries. His oration in Havana on that occasion was quite the equal of the oration that another great African revolutionary, Amilcar Cabral, had delivered in that same city.

It is difficult to say why he knowingly settled for a neoliberal dispensation in the course of reaching a settlement for the dismantling of the political and legal structures of the Apartheid regime. Five different hypotheses have been offered to explain this. One, that as descendant of a traditional royal family and then member of the black professional middle class, Mandela was surely opposed to white racial privilege but did not have any serious anti-capitalist commitments. Second, that he wanted to secure total victory on issues of racial equality and democratic rights of majority rule while postponing other battles to another, later historical phase. Third, that the general

collapse of the socialist bloc, Third World anti-imperialist nationalism, the myriad 'African socialisms' etc., had left him so unhinged, so bereft of alternatives, so acutely aware of an unfavourable balance of power on the international scale, that he felt compelled to settle for much less than he desired. Fourth, that he, with all his moral grandeur, was surrounded by men – his own comrades of a lifetime – men like Mbeki and Zuma and countless others – who had been so corrupted in the process that he simply did not command the supra-human resources that would make it possible for him to concentrate on completing the arduous process of deracialization of state structures and also, somehow, stemming the rot in other spheres. Fifth, that the issue of Mandela's personal role is quite secondary to the fact that what happened in South Africa after the advent of black rule was structurally very similar to what has happened in a host of Asian and African countries after decolonization: the rise of the national bourgeoisie as a class rapacious in its exploitation and oppression at home but dependent and comprador in its relations with global capitalism. As Fanon memorably said: the historical phase of the national bourgeoisie is a useless phase. Much worse than useless, we may now add after far greater accumulation of horrors than what Fanon might have imagined.

There is probably some truth to each of these propositions. The tragedy of it all is that it was during the presidency of one of the most inspiring figures of our time that racial apartheid in South Africa was replaced by a class apartheid so severe that perhaps a majority of the blacks are now worse off today than ever before, relative not only to the white property-owners but also those privileged black ones who have amassed fabulous

fortunes since the apartheid state structures were undone. It all became very much worse under Mbeki and Zuma but the foundations were laid earlier, in the process of the negotiations and then in those early years of the democratic republic when Mandela was at the helm of affairs.

It is just as well that Mandela had the grace to not want a second term for his presidency. He preferred to recover his independence of spirit and his stature as a moral voice without the trappings of office. As president, he could never have described Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, as 'Bush's foreign minister'. Nor could he in that capacity have so off-handedly said that, 'If there is a country that has committed unspeakable atrocities in the world, it is the United States of America.' He was one of those rare human beings who only get diminished by the holding of office, no matter how high the office may be, especially as others surrounding him have already been diminished by the ambition and corruption from which Mandela did not entirely extricate himself. Freed from the ceremonies of state, Mandela, in roughly the last decade of his life, recovered that moral grandeur which had been his throughout his life until he started making all those compromises as negotiator and then as first President of the Republic. The stirring farewell the people of South Africa gave him was well deserved, and a more sober assessment of his life, his achievements and his shortcomings can now begin. There are, in any case, ample resources in his legacy for a new generation to invoke his name yet again as they set out to fight for a better South Africa.

Gender, Politics and Sustainable Land Utilisation: A Comparative Study of Pre-Fast Track and Fast Track Resettlement Programmes in Zimbabwe

Onias Mafa, Dakar, CODESRIA, 2014, 252 p., ISBN: 978-2-86978-590-8

The agrarian reform dynamics in Southern Africa have to be understood within the framework of colonial land policies and legislation that were designed essentially to expropriate land and natural resource property rights from the indigenous people in favour of the white settlers. Faced with a skewed distribution and ownership of land in favour of former colonial settlers, the new independent states are faced with the daunting task of redistributing land equitably as a way of correcting the colonial injustices in land tenure and use. This comparative study on Zimbabwe's agrarian reforms may provide countries such as South Africa and Namibia with valuable lessons, as these countries attempt to implement sustainable agrarian reforms

