

**LECTURE BY THE PATRON OF THE TMF,  
THABO MBEKI,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF  
THE CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF OLIVER REGINALD TAMBO:  
JOHANNESBURG, 27 OCTOBER, 2017.**

Members and representatives of the Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Foundation,  
our hosts this evening;

Dear Members of the Tambo family;

Fellow South Africans;

Comrades, friends, ladies and gentlemen:

Had OR Tambo been alive, today we would have gathered in happy  
gatherings throughout our country to wish him a very happy centenary  
birthday!

However as we meet today, to mark this centenary, we still wish to convey a  
heartfelt happy birthday message to Oliver Tambo, our beloved OR and  
esteemed leader, certain that he will hear our message wherever he is.

Accordingly, today, October 27, 2017 our people, joined by the peoples of  
the rest of Africa and the world, stand up and say in unison – happy birthday  
our dear and respected Oliver Tambo, our beloved OR!

However, at the same time as we celebrate a hundredth birthday, we have  
gathered here today at a time of great stress for OR's movement, the ANC,  
and his country, South Africa.

The comments we will make about Oliver Tambo as we celebrate the  
centenary of his birth will emphasise two matters.

One of these is that periodically the ANC has had to confront and respond to  
threats which challenged its very existence.

Another is that these threats and the ANC responses have also been related  
to the development of our country.

This describes what has been somewhat of an umbilical cord between the development of the ANC and the evolution of South Africa.

In this regard I would like to argue that for half-a-century Oliver Tambo stood out as a defining player in terms of the construction of the relationship described by the respective evolutions of the ANC and South Africa.

I have just referred to what I described as threats which challenged the very existence of the ANC.

I am certain that this phenomenon has not been sufficiently canvassed in the public discourse correctly to explain and implant in the public consciousness our historical evolution as a country and people.

I will now mention three of these threats and elaborate on them later in my comments.

By 1940 the ANC was faced with the threat of withering away out of existence, that is, of ceasing to exist, because of neglect by a leadership which was too preoccupied with the pursuit of its individual professional interests.

The new President of the ANC, Dr A.B. Xuma together with his Secretary General, Rev James Calata, worked successfully during the 1940s to resurrect the ANC.

Oliver Tambo played a central role in this process, including as the first Secretary General of the ANC Youth League and later the Secretary General and Deputy President of the ANC.

The ANC resurrected in the 1940s became such a threat to our country's white minority regime that it was banned in 1960.

As all of us know, there followed a period of extreme repression imposed on our country by the apartheid regime, starting in the 1960s, such that towards the end of that decade the ANC was virtually wiped out as an organised revolutionary formation inside South Africa.

Again as we all know, exactly at the time of the banning of the ANC, its leadership sent its then Deputy President, Oliver Tambo, out of the country, to establish and lead what was described as the External Mission of the ANC.

In the end, as had happened during the 1940s, Oliver Tambo had to play a central role, this time as the leader, to help resurrect an ANC which, again, had almost died, as had been the case in 1940.

The threat to the very existence of the ANC in 1940 had been caused by gross negligence on the part of its leadership. This occurred during a period

when broadly this ANC leadership felt that there had been no fundamental change in terms of the character of the reality which had dictated the formation of the ANC in 1912.

The threat to the very existence of the ANC from 1960 emanated from extreme repression by the apartheid regime.

As I have said, Oliver Tambo led the successful process to defeat this new and extremely serious threat to the very existence of the ANC and helped to rebuild the ANC which then proceeded to lead the campaign which led to the democratic victory of 1994.

To recap what I have said:

I argue that we must pay heartfelt tribute to Oliver Tambo for the central contribution he made during the 1940s to help resurrect the ANC from its death bed and position it such that by 1960 it had mobilised the masses of our people to stand out as the strategic and practical opponent which threatened to overthrow the apartheid regime.

Further, I am arguing that we must pay heartfelt tribute to Oliver Tambo for his leadership of the ANC and the rest of the broad liberation movement, such that this movement as a whole recovered from the near destruction brought about by the extreme repression which followed that banning of the ANC in 1960 to lead the process which led to our liberation in 1994.

The ANC is now, during the year of the Centenary of the birth of Oliver Tambo, confronted by yet another threat of destruction.

As all of us know, the ANC is now 105 years old. During the years of its existence it has faced many challenges to its place as the preeminent and historic representative of the oppressed.

These include the challenges posed by the All African Convention in the 1930s, the formation of the PAC in 1959, the birth of such formations within the ANC as the "Gang of Eight" during the 1970s, and the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement again during the 1970s.

The historical reality is that none of these developments succeeded to displace the ANC as what I have described as the preeminent and historic representative of the oppressed.

This is why accordingly, this evening I am not discussing any of these developments, not because I am trying to downplay their significance. Rather, I am trying to focus on the strategic and historic challenges which have threatened the very existence of the ANC during the 105 years of its existence.

In the context of everything I have said, I would now like to make the firm and unequivocal observation that the ANC is now facing the third most serious threat to its very existence of 105 years.

By 1940 the ANC faced the threat of destruction. Members of the ANC successfully intervened to address this threat.

By 1960 the ANC faced yet another threat of destruction. Members of the ANC successfully intervened to address this threat.

By 2017, today, the ANC faces yet another and third historic threat of destruction.

The immense and historic challenge we face is to answer the question – does the ANC have the required members who will successfully intervene to address this new threat to the very survival of the ANC?

The ANC faces this third strategic threat during a period when unfortunately we no longer have Oliver Tambo among us, and therefore the eminent leader who played a decisive role in helping our Movement successfully to defeat the earlier threats which challenged its very survival.

In this regard I would like to argue that the fact of this third threat, and the absolute imperative to defeat it, imposes an obligation on all those who claim to be admirers and supporters of Oliver Tambo practically to act in a manner which lives up to the example which OR set.

Thus would we give practical expression to what is said as a matter of routine at funerals, that the nation must honour the example set by the departed, consistent with the call – long live the spirit of the heroes and heroines who have left us!

In his Oration as the nation laid the mortal remains of Oliver Reginald Tambo to rest, just over 24 years ago on May 2, 1993, Nelson Mandela made a commitment which I believe is binding on all of us.

He said:

*"Let all of us who live say that while we live, Oliver Tambo will not die!*

*"May he, for his part, rest in peace.*

*"Go well, my brother and farewell, dear friend.*

*"As you instructed, we will bring peace to our tormented land.*

*"As you directed, we will bring freedom to the oppressed and liberation to the oppressor.*

*"As you strived, we will restore the dignity of the dehumanised.*

*"As you commanded, we will defend the option of a peaceful resolution of our problems.*

*"As you prayed, we will respond to the cries of the wretched of the earth.*

*"As you loved them, we will, always, stretch out a hand of endearment to those who are your flesh and blood.*

*"In all this, we will not fail you."*

I have made the assertion that this commitment by Nelson Mandela is binding on all of us, that *"In all this we will not fail you"*. Madiba could make this genuine commitment not as a rhetorical flourish but as an affirmation of the very close bond of comradeship and friendship that existed between himself and Oliver Tambo.

Accordingly Nelson Mandela made the commitments he announced during the Oration at OR Tambo's funeral seriously to convey a solemn message to the nation.

Nelson Mandela could have ended his message to the nation merely by making the statement:

*"Let all of us who live say that while we live, Oliver Tambo will not die!"*

I say this because Nelson Mandela spoke these words because what Oliver Tambo had done during half-a-century of struggle had helped to define the destiny of a better life for all the generations which lived on after he had passed on, without exception.

All this is because Oliver Tambo's life constitutes both a journey through many phases of the development of South Africa, and the attendant liberation struggle, from the 1940s to the 1990s, and the promise of liberation and the positive benefits this would bring.

Thus Oliver Tambo was among those in the 1940s who, as leaders and members of the ANC Youth League, stood up to say that the then central task of the ANC, as the leader of our national liberation movement, was to activate the masses of our people to engage in mass action to secure their own liberation.

Oliver Tambo served among the leaders and activists who helped to ensure that this vision of mass struggle was actually implemented.

Oliver Tambo served among the leaders and activists who helped our broad movement for national liberation to elaborate and adopt that seminal

document, the Freedom Charter, which defined the strategic tasks of the national democratic revolution.

Oliver Tambo served among the leaders and activists who had to ensure the continuation and intensification of the struggle despite the banning of the ANC and the implementation by the apartheid regime of its campaign of extreme repression.

This included the successful inclusion of armed struggle into the strategy of the ANC, which meant ending a period of half-a-century of commitment to non-violent struggle.

Oliver Tambo served among the leaders and activists who foresaw that the all-round liberation struggle for national liberation would oblige the apartheid regime finally to concede to the long-standing demand of the ANC and the rest of the liberation movement for a negotiated end to apartheid and white minority rule, and therefore ensured that the movement prepares for this eventuality.

What all this means is that Oliver Tambo was present, as one of our leaders, at all seminal moments in the evolution of the ANC and our struggle during the fifty years from the 1940s to the 1990s.

Accordingly as we mark the Centenary of his birth we must celebrate the enormous contribution which Oliver Tambo made to the victory of the Democratic Revolution in 1994.

When Dr A.B. Xuma delivered his Presidential Address at the ANC National Conference in 1941 he said:

*"Since Congress was founded and made its initial spectacular success it has experienced periods of inactivity because you and I thought and believed that organisations led by non-Africans were more dignified than African organisations and thus we abandoned our organisations and surrendered our leadership to others..."*

*"Fellow Countrymen, this is a challenge. Shall we not pick up the gauntlet? South Africa, white and black, needs us. We must pull our full weight; we must make our real contribution to the building and the progress of South Africa to the full benefit, mutual helpfulness and happiness of all sections, white and black."*

The truth is that when Dr Xuma acceded to the position of President of the ANC in 1940, the organisation was to all intents and purposes dormant and moribund.

As I have said, Dr Xuma then worked very hard, together with Secretary General Rev James Calata, to reconstitute and reactivate the ANC effectively to discharge its responsibility as the voice of the African majority, and made

important progress in this regard. It was in this context that Dr Xuma called on the delegates at the 1941 ANC Conference to “pick up the gauntlet” and to “pull our weight”.

In the same 1941 Presidential Address Dr Xuma correctly detailed some of the burning issues which faced the African people at the time.

He then went on to say that *"Congress must take steps for representations to be made to the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence-Field Marshal J. C. Smuts and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Native Affairs-Colonel Deneys Reitz"* on the various burning issues he had identified.

This short history of the ANC I have mentioned is directly related to the vitally important contribution Oliver Tambo made which I have said led to the victory of the Democratic Revolution in 1994.

The successful establishment of the ANC Youth League in 1944 was an important part of the historic process led by the then President and Secretary General of the ANC to resurrect and reactivate the organisation.

In a letter written to the ANC and published in January 1956, Dr Xuma wrote that *"the foundation representatives"* of the ANC Youth League, *"met with me in my library at home and were baptised and established by me and the late Mr R.V. Selope Thema at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg as the African National Congress Youth League..."*

Addressing the delegates in 1944, ANC President A.B. Xuma said:

*"You have been summoned to assemble in this hall, to discuss an important question, the question of the formation of an organisation to solve the problem of African people, a problem of a future South Africa...You have been called upon to discuss the formation of a Youth League under the African National Congress. The proposal of the formation of this organisation was passed in Bloemfontein in 1942, also confirmed in 1943, by the Conference of the African National Congress."*

It is in this context that the involvement of the then young people in the establishment of the ANC Youth League, among whom was its first Secretary General, Oliver Tambo, assumes its importance.

That importance derives from the fact that it seems obvious that the historic process to resurrect and reactivate the ANC would have been seriously compromised if it had not included the initiative to establish the Youth League as an organ of the ANC charged with the task to mobilise the youth into the struggle.

In this regard I must also mention the important fact that it was also under the Xuma-Calata leadership, in 1948, that the ANC Women's League was

established, to take the place of the Bantu Women's League which had been established in 1918, led by Charlotte Maxeke.

It is also worth noting that it was only through a decision taken at its 1943 Conference that the ANC allowed women to join it as members!

The importance of the posture adopted by the Youth League concerning the conduct of the struggle was underlined by the conflict which arose later between Dr Xuma and the leadership of the Youth League which was ultimately resolved through the adoption of the 1949 Programme of Action.

As all of us know that conflict centred on the matter of what the resurrected and reactivated ANC should do to achieve the liberation of the oppressed.

Consistent with previous ANC policy and practice, in his 1941 Presidential Address Dr Xuma expressly said that the ANC would petition the then Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, and Minister of Native Affairs, Deneys Reitz, with regard to the demands of the black oppressed.

To the contrary, the Youth League was of the firm view that that those demands could only be achieved through struggle against the oppressor rather than through petitions submitted to that oppressor.

A vitally important part of the position taken by the Youth League was that the posture of struggle on which it insisted would mean and did mean that the resurrected and reactivated ANC would be transformed into a mass organisation capable of mobilising the millions of our people into struggle.

Given the strategic role the mass struggle played in the Democratic Victory and the leading role of the ANC with regard to the achievement of that victory, it is not difficult to understand and appreciate the historic importance of the changes to the ANC which were made in the 1940s.

I refer here to the changes which both resurrected and reactivated the ANC and radically reoriented its approach with regard to the methods it would use to achieve the liberation of the oppressed.

These laid the firm basis in terms of which in the end it was possible to mount a multi-pronged and sustained strategic offensive to defeat the apartheid regime, with the ANC serving as the universally accepted leader of that offensive.

I would now like to mention a few bare biographical facts about Oliver Tambo to highlight his important place among the leadership of the ANC over the half-century I have mentioned.

As I have said, OR was elected as the first Secretary General of the ANC Youth League in 1944. He was then 27 years old.



Three years later, in 1947, aged 30, he became a Member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC.

Six years later, in 1953, he was elected Secretary General of the ANC to replace Walter Sisulu who had been banned.

And five years later, in 1958, when he was only 41 years old, OR was elected Deputy President to our outstanding leader, Nkosi Albert Luthuli.

The ANC sent him, its Deputy President, out of the country in 1960, to head what was then called the External Mission of the Movement. The ANC Conference held in Lobatse, Bechuanaland in 1962 confirmed this decision which had earlier been taken by the NEC.

Unfortunately we lost ANC President Nkosi A.J. Luthuli in 1967, who died in suspect circumstances. OR, then 50 years old, became Acting President of the ANC while continuing as Head of the External Mission.

He was elected President of the ANC at the 1985 ANC Consultative Conference held in Kabwe, Zambia.

Regrettably OR suffered from a stroke in 1989 which severely limited his capacity to continue fully to play his leadership role.

He handed over the Presidency of the ANC to Nelson Mandela when the latter was elected to this position at the 1991 National Conference of the ANC.

That same Conference elected OR to the position of National Chairperson of the ANC, a position he held until he unfortunately passed away in 1993. Before I started mentioning this short political biography of Oliver Tambo I had said that the changes effected during the 1940s by the ANC leadership, which included OR, ultimately created the possibility for the liberation movement to mount a multi-pronged and sustained strategic offensive to defeat the apartheid regime, with the ANC serving as the universally accepted leader of that offensive.

As all of us know, the ANC identified the prongs, what it described as the four pillars of that strategy as mass struggle, the international isolation of the apartheid system, ANC underground work and the armed struggle.

All these were important parts of the sustained general offensive which resulted in the ultimate defeat of the apartheid regime.

Each of the pillars I have mentioned constituted a complex process with regard both to identifying the specific tasks that had to be implemented, which had to change as circumstances changed, and ensuring the actual implementation of these evolving tasks.

Oliver Tambo played a central role with regard to the development of each and all these pillars, all of which rested on the strategic base established by the changes to the ANC effected in the 1940s in whose elaboration and implementation, as I have said, OR was a central actor.

As we all know, the ANC leadership took what proved to be a critically important decision when, as we said earlier, it sent its then Deputy President, Oliver Tambo, out of the country to head the External Mission.

This was at the beginning of a period of extreme repression which after some time, and for some time, virtually decimated the structures of the ANC within our country and made it impossible for it fully to discharge its responsibilities within the country as a direct leader of the liberation movement.

This period included the arrest, assassination and imprisonment of virtually the entirety of the most significant echelons of the leadership of the ANC and related formations.

This elevated the importance of what had been intended to serve only as the External Mission of the ANC, placing an obligation on the External Mission in fact to serve as the Headquarters and guiding body of the ANC as a whole.

Effectively this positioned OR as the leader of the ANC, the *primus inter pares*, for more than a quarter-of-a-century which proved to be the then most difficult period in the history of the ANC.

He ultimately came to enjoy the unqualified respect of all sections of the ANC at home and abroad, and the related Mass Democratic Movement.

At the same time, the overwhelming majority in the rest of the world, starting from the rest of Africa, recognised him as a legitimate representative and spokesperson of the oppressed majority in our country.

I am saying that as we mark the Centenary of Oliver Tambo's birth, we must pay unreserved tribute to him for his vital contribution to the benchmark achievements of the ANC and the broad liberation movement over many decades.

To summarise, I refer here to:

- the vital changes the ANC decided upon and implemented during the 1940s;
- the development and implementation of the strategy of mass struggle and the greatest unity of the democratic forces which played a vital role in the defeat of the apartheid regime;

- the development of a united international movement for the isolation of apartheid South Africa which was central to the victory over the apartheid regime;
- the reconstruction of the ANC underground machinery in our country which enabled the ANC more directly to live up to its responsibility practically to act as a leader and representative of the oppressed;
- the pursuit of the armed struggle such that, despite all challenges, this struggle played a critical role in asserting the resolve of the oppressed to overcome all obstacles to achieve their liberation; and,
- the preparations the ANC undertook to ensure that it was properly equipped to engage in a new field of struggle – that is, negotiations with the apartheid regime!

I am insisting that with regard to all these strategic interventions, which made the 1994 Democratic Victory possible, we had Oliver Tambo as a decisive, leading and defining player.

For this reason, today, as we mark the Centenary of OR's birth, I have no hesitation to convey my heartfelt view that it is to Oliver Tambo, OR, that we should bestow the title – Father of South Africa's Democracy!

It was not possible that Oliver Tambo could achieve what he did as a leader of the ANC, as I have tried to indicate, unless he had the personal capacity and attributes in this regard.

I was very fortunate that for almost two decades I was privileged to work quite closely with Oliver Tambo within the structures of the ANC. This gave me some understanding of the character of this eminent patriot and leader of our people.

I am honoured to use this understanding to help us properly to celebrate the Centenary of the birthday of Oliver Tambo, and therefore pay tribute to him as one of our most eminent heroes and peoples' representative.

In his 1941 Presidential Address to that year's ANC National Conference, Dr Xuma said:

*"To Congress we must be loyal and true. For Congress, we must forget any personal or sectional interests or gain. We must put the cause and the interests of the people before any expediency...To be true leaders, we must put the interests and welfare of our people above our own."*

Much later, in a December 1955 Letter to the ANC, published in January 1956, Dr Xuma said:

*"Leadership means service for and not domination over others. True and genuine leaders serve the cause of the people and do not expect the cause to serve them or become a source of profit and honour for them. Africa expects all her sons and daughters to serve the cause of the people loyally, sincerely and honestly."*

I cite these remarks by A.B. Xuma because as we mark the Centenary of the birth of Oliver Tambo I believe that all our people should understand that OR became the leader of the South African oppressed, and more, accepted by all, at home and abroad, because of particular attributes.

At the heart of Oliver Tambo's belief system was exactly what Dr Xuma had communicated to him and his other youthful comrades that:

*"To Congress we must be loyal and true. For Congress, we must forget any personal or sectional interests or gain. We must put the cause and the interests of the people before any expediency..."*

I can confirm that whatever else OR did, during all the years I worked with him, this precept remained his constant guide - "To Congress we must be loyal and true...We must put the cause and the interests of the people before any expediency..."

Never would he depart from any action which would violate these two principles – that is loyalty to the ANC and its values and commitment to pursue the genuine interests of the people.

This makes the correct point that Oliver Tambo was a principled person.

Accordingly all of us knew that in all our interactions with OR, we had to honour the principles and practices always to tell the truth, to respect the principle of honesty, to exercise our right to state our views, to behave according to the agreed rules in terms of our membership of the ANC, and never to promote whatever might be our personal interests by telling lies or engaging in subterfuge.

In addition to all this we also knew that OR had other personal attributes which made all of us very happy that he had surrendered himself to serve our Movement, the ANC, the struggle, and the people as a whole.

This related to the fact that he had a very sharp intellect!

As he grew up he had demonstrated outstanding competence in the natural sciences, including mathematics, physics and chemistry, and taught these subjects.

Nevertheless, he also had the necessary knowledge to engage in debates which discussed issues relevant to social science.

He also acquired the necessary qualifications to practice as a lawyer who could and would appear in our Courts especially to defend our people against the ravages of the apartheid system.

As a leader of the External Mission of the ANC, among others he demonstrated his leadership as an activist for the development of the arts, in all their forms, including as expressed in the music in which he was especially interested.

The sharp intellect he showed made him a great strategist and master tactician in terms of the conduct of the liberation struggle over the many decades I have mentioned.

He demonstrated that immense capacity in matters of strategy for instance when he persuaded our Movement to prepare for negotiations and defining the democratic South Africa through these negotiations even as he led the same Movement in its efforts to intensify its offensive to overthrow the oppressor regime.

To put this matter more generally, OR understood that the very advances we achieved through struggle would result in producing a qualitatively new situation presenting us with the task to have to respond to the challenges posed by our own victories.

All this means that at all times OR did everything to ensure that our Movement never lost sight of the strategic goals it had to achieve at all stages of our struggle.

I would also suggest that for us to gain an excellent grasp of OR's capacity as a master tactician of our struggle everybody should study the January 8<sup>th</sup> ANC Anniversary Statements he presented during the years 1979 – 1989.

We would see that the comments and proposals in these Statements constitute a virtual catalogue of the evolution of our struggle in all its four pillars, demonstrating the capacity properly to understand the objective situation and respond to that situation correctly and on time.

It is a matter of common cause that OR succeeded to lead the ANC both to recover from the heavy blows it suffered during the post-1960 period of extreme repression and to resume its legal existence from 1990 as a united organisation.

Fundamental to that unity were what OR did, working with other leaders of our Movement, to ensure that our Movement as a whole understood and rallied around:

- a shared value system loyally to serve the Movement and the people, opposed to unethical practice aiming at self-aggrandisement; this

included aversion to all initiatives by anybody to seek to position themselves as leaders merely to promote selfish interests;

- a shared understanding of the Movement's strategic and tactical goals and a common commitment to act to achieve these goals, ready to make the necessary sacrifices in this regard; and,
- a shared commitment among all members of the Movement to work with one another as Comrades, fully understanding that the realisation of the common goal of achieving national liberation and building a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa required that these Comrades must act together as one united Movement.

What also contributed greatly to that unity was the manner in which OR conducted the internal discussions within the ANC. He would always listen to and respect all opinions expressed and then state his own view in a manner which would assure all participants that their views had been taken into account. This helped enormously to inspire a spirit of inclusivity among the members and a sense of common ownership of everything to do with the Movement and the struggle.

I must also mention that OR was a convinced Pan-Africanist. This helped further to entrench this outlook throughout the ranks of the ANC and contributed in no small measure to the development of the attitude among millions throughout our Continent that the struggle to defeat the apartheid system was as much ours as it was theirs.

It is in this context that I am certain that the important matter of the renaissance of our Continent must occupy significant space on our agenda.

Earlier I said that the ANC now faces the third threat of destruction since its foundation almost 106 years ago. This time that threat emanates from acts of commission originating from within the ANC itself.

As we all know, the ANC gained access to state power from 1994 onwards. It was inevitable that this would happen because of the place which the ANC occupied in the hearts and minds of the majority of our people as their true representative.

However the challenge which arose with this access to state power was and is that it could be abused, was and is being abused for purposes of self-enrichment. This means that the ANC contains within its ranks people who are absolutely contemptuous of the most fundamental values of the ANC, at whose centre is a commitment selflessly to serve the people.

These are people who only see the ANC as a step-ladder to enable them to access state power for the express purpose of using that access for self-enrichment.

By definition these are people who are card-carrying members of the ANC, our national governing party since 1994, but who have completely repudiated the value system which inspired Oliver Tambo throughout his life.

Part of the national tragedy in this regard is that the ANC recognised the emergence of this immensely negative phenomenon quite early after 1994.

For instance, in his Political Report at the 1997 National Conference of the ANC, Nelson Mandela said, among others:

*"A number of negative features within the ANC and the broad democratic movement have emerged during the last three years..."*

*"One of these negative features is the emergence of careerism within our ranks. Many among our members see their membership of the ANC as a means to advance their personal ambitions to attain positions of power and access to resources for their own individual gratification.*

*"Accordingly, they work to manipulate the movement to create the conditions for their success..."*

*"During this period, we have also been faced with various instances of corruption involving our own members, including those who occupy positions of authority by virtue of the victory of the democratic revolution.*

*"These have sought either to steal public resources or to extort financial tributes from the people..."*

*"This is not surprising in the light of what we have already said in this Report about the entrenchment of corruption in our society in general and the consequent desperate desire to accumulate wealth in the shortest possible period of time."*

And almost twenty years later, and only three months ago, ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe delivered what was called a Diagnostic Organisational Report and said:

*"We owe it to ourselves first, the movement and society, to analyse in detail the implications of a liberation movement that has ascended to power and, therefore, controls huge resources. Being in power is rapidly becoming a source of political bankruptcy, in that members of the ANC fight for deployment either as councillors, MPLs and MPs – respectively, as if there is 'no tomorrow'..."*

*"The use of money to buy votes or elections in the party is at the heart of the decline of the quality of structures across the board. Money has replaced consciousness as a basis for being elected into leadership positions at all levels of the organisation. The ethical behaviour of leaders is no longer an issue, as it has been replaced by status..."*

*"Cadres of our movement should be guided by values of honesty, humility, hard work, commitment, sacrifice, and selflessness. We hardly talk about these values which, in sections of our movement, are seen as backward and a hindrance to people accessing quick material benefit..."*

In the 1997 Political Report I have cited, Nelson Mandela also said:

*"In reality, during the last three years, we have found it difficult to deal with such careerists in a decisive manner. We, ourselves, have therefore allowed the space to emerge for these opportunists to pursue their counter-revolutionary goals, to the detriment of our movement and struggle..."*

*"Clearly, we have to take all necessary measures to purge ourselves of such members and organise ourselves in a way that will make it difficult for corrupt elements to gain entry into our movement."*

The fact of the matter is that during the last two decades the ANC has failed to do the two things which Nelson Mandela mentioned in 1997 – to purge itself of the mercenaries who had joined its ranks and to make it difficult for such elements to join the Movement.

This failure surely means that inevitably the negative situation which Nelson Mandela decried would get worse, as was attested to by ANC Secretary General Mantashe in July.

The numbers of those who see the ANC as but a mere tool to access political power and corruptly acquired wealth would increase. In the end it was inevitable that this would result in the transformation of quantity into quality, in this way.

What was and was seen to be abnormal twenty years ago, in 1997, would become the norm by 2017, hence the observation made by Secretary General Mantashe concerning 'fights for deployment among ANC members, as if there is no tomorrow'.

This means that the historic value system of the ANC has become so corrupted that its replacement, that is unprincipled access to political power and the related corrupt self-enrichment has in fact become the norm within the organisation.

It is this reality which has led to the universal scramble for deployment, 'as if there is no tomorrow', and indeed the repugnant phenomenon of the murders of and among municipal councillors so prevalent but not only in KwaZulu-Natal, a matter which is currently being investigated in that Province by the Moerane Commission.

Necessarily and logically the qualitative change I have mentioned, arising from the failure to defeat the process of the increase in the numbers of



those who remained in the ranks of the ANC for selfish and corrupt reasons as described by Nelson Mandela, would in the end also affect the composition and quality of the very leadership of the Movement.

It is therefore perfectly obvious that what has happened is that there has been an institutional ascendance to a position of dominance or major influence at all levels of leadership in the ANC of exactly the negative elements whom Nelson Mandela urged the ANC to defeat.

I am therefore arguing that the transformation of quantity into quality has resulted in the entrenchment within the ANC of a rapacious and predatory value system and the ascendance to positions of authority or major influence in the leadership structures of the ANC of people who are both the product and expression of that rapacious and predatory value system.

I will now cite just one example to illustrate the qualitative change I have been talking about.

The 1997 Mahikeng ANC National Conference took an important decision that those who are elected to leadership positions in the ANC should be ready to discharge their responsibilities in that regard, with no expectation that their positions in the ANC entitled them to positions in government.

It was therefore decided that ANC candidates for the position of Provincial Premier should be selected in the same manner as the National Ministers with no requirement that the Provincial Chair of the ANC would necessarily become the Premier.

In the run-up to the 2007 Polokwane ANC national Conference, a spurious argument emerged within the ANC about a non-existent problem of 'two centres of power', so-called.

As a result of this the Polokwane Conference took the diametrically opposed position to the Mahikeng Conference. It now said, instead, that any person elected as President of the ANC would be the ANC candidate for the position of President of the Republic.

This also meant that the Provincial Chair of the ANC would be the Provincial Premier.

This unfortunate decision meant that formally the ANC took the decision that occupation of senior positions in the ANC was the guaranteed route of access to state power, exactly the kind of understanding which the Movement had sought to discourage among the membership as a whole.

The negative situation I have sought to describe, according to which the ANC, particularly as a governing party, allows itself to behave according to a rapacious value system of conscious abuse of state power for corrupt self-

enrichment and permits itself to be influenced by a leadership informed by that value system, necessarily produces certain systemic consequences.

Among these are:

- the corruption and weakening of the ANC and the rest of the progressive movement;
- the corruption and weakening of the institutions of the democratic State;
- the undermining of the precepts and practices of our constitutional democracy;
- state capture;
- failure to achieve significant advances with regard to achieving the goal of a better life for all; and,
- virtual abandonment of the historic Pan-Africanist perspective of the ANC.

To emphasise how dangerous these inevitable outcomes are, I can well imagine how much those are now rejoicing who were the diehards who belong to the apartheid system and who never fully accepted that ours should become a non-racial democracy.

Perhaps the most famous of Karl Marx's Theses on Feuerbach is the last, which says:

"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it."

I have sought to suggest that the negative situation currently affecting and characterising the ANC will, unless it is addressed correctly and immediately, sooner rather than later result in the destruction of the ANC.

It would therefore seem that those who remain genuine members of the ANC, honestly committed to its historic value system centred on selfless service to the people, should take the necessary steps to change the self-destructive course on which the Movement has embarked, which, among others, has lost the ANC much support as demonstrated in the successive national, provincial and local government elections since 2009 to date.

As the first step these members of the ANC must genuinely accept that the Movement is immersed in a deep crisis and then proceed to characterise the source and nature of the problem, as Oliver Tambo did, which twice saved the ANC from destruction, understanding that without a correct diagnosis, there can be no effective and successful cure.

I believe that these should seek to implement what Nelson Mandela suggested in 1997 when he said "*we have to take all necessary measures to purge ourselves of such members and organise ourselves in a way that will make it difficult for corrupt elements to gain entry into our movement.*"

In this regard I believe that the ANC policy document, "Through the Eye of a Needle", the ANC Oath which is in its Constitution, the values stated by A.B. Xuma and accepted and implemented by Oliver Tambo and the others since the 1940s, and the conduct of lifestyle audits would help to determine exactly who is a genuine member of the ANC.

I would also suggest that these members should conduct an open and honest assessment of the damage that has been done as the ANC allowed itself to fall under the influence of the rapacious value system and leadership I have mentioned, and decide on measures that must be taken to address this damage.

In this context the ANC members to whom I have referred must come back to the matter of redefining or restating the current strategic goals it faces, which I am certain would include the eradication of poverty, the eradication of inequality, the strengthening of the democratic state and African renewal.

Here I am not talking about drawing up some wish list and pretend that this is the kind of programme that is required.

I am talking about the setting of strategic goals and indicating the realistic measures which would be adopted to achieve the set objectives, following on the footsteps of what I said about OR uniting the Movement around agreed and clear goals.

I am making all these suggestions about what genuine members of the ANC should do out of respect for the fact that OR never merely sought to interpret our situation but always worked to change it.

As all of us have sought to celebrate the Centenary of his birth, we have shouted slogans such as – Long live the spirit of Oliver Tambo! Some among us, again out of respect for OR, have even gone so far as to claim that they know how he would respond to some specific current situation or event.

However I believe that the best way to honour Oliver Tambo as we mark the Centenary of his birth would be to live up to the example he has set by:

- always being loyal to the truth;
- always being loyal to principle and the historic value system of the ANC;
- defeating the rapacious and predatory value system and the related leadership which are holding the ANC hostage;
- helping to unite the ANC, the rest of the progressive movement and the people as a whole around a realistic programme for the acceleration of the advance towards achieving the goal of a better life for all;
- helping to ensure the full and unfettered functioning of our country as a constitutional democracy; and,

- reasserting in practical ways the principle and practice that we share a common destiny with our fellow Africans, including those in the African Diaspora.

I am convinced that if especially the generations currently in the ANC did all this, walking in the footsteps of Oliver Tambo, they help to achieve the historic goal of rescuing the ANC from destruction, as did Oliver Tambo in his day.

History will answer the question unequivocally whether we had the courage to live up to the extraordinary legacy which Oliver Tambo left behind!

Thank you.