

**SOLOMON MAHLANGU FREEDOM COLLEGE: SYMBOL OF  
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY.**

Presentation to the Anti-Apartheid Conference

Durban, 10-13 October 2004

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Chairperson,  
All Protocol observed,  
Comrades and Friends

I have been invited to address this International Conference “*as a South African, with (my) views of the Volunteers who came to work in SOMAFCO*” (Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College.)

One month ago, on September 10 2004, Mohammed Tikly (First Director of SOMAFCO) made a presentation at a workshop in the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala. During that presentation, he paid full tribute to States and International Anti-Apartheid Movements that supported the fight against Apartheid in South Africa.

I do not intend to talk at length about the history of SOMAFCO because my intervebtion, which incorporates extracts from the report we compiled after our (Tikly’s & Manghezi’s) visit to SOMAFCO (March 2002), is a supplement to both Tikly’s contribution in Uppsala, as well as that which Sherry Mclean has just delivered.

-It is a tribute to Tanzania for donating the land on which the two Settlements (Mazimbu & Dakawa) were established, and for sustaining these Settlements over the years with enduring solidarity and friendship.

-It is a tribute to the Anti-Apartheid Volunteers of teachers and technicians, who came to work and live in SOMAFCO, among the South African exiles, and took part in the building and maintenance of the institution from its beginnings in 1978, to the day when it was handed over to the government of Tanzania in 1992.

-It is a tribute to the Nordic States, to various other European and African countries, as well as to organs of the United Nations, especially UNESCO, for providing the funds and other assistance towards the establishment of the infrastructure in the two Settlements.<sup>1</sup>

However, it is important, at this stage, to mention a few landmarks in the life of SOMAFCO:

-The period from 1978 to 1992 saw the development of the settlements of Mazimbu and Dakawa near Morogoro. The central institution set up by the ANC was SOMAFCO, and an array of supporting facilities, including the Ruth First Education

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Tikly, “The SOMAFCO Collection: A Case Study of Liberation Archives. Nordiska Institute’s Workshop, Uppsala, 10.09.2004

orientation Centre, the Dakawa Vocational Training Centre, the Dakawa Arts Centre, two libraries, two primary and nursery schools, day care centers, boarding accommodation, youth centers and sports fields.

-Other self-reliance activities were also set up. These included a 16-bed hospital, two clinics, two farms and small industries for furniture, clothing and leather production. The two settlements had an infrastructure of running water, electricity, sewage disposal and a road network. All these facilities, including nearly a thousand dwellings, were a result of the ANC's planning and construction departments.

On 9 July 1992, when the late ANC President Oliver Tambo handed over the two settlements to the then President Hasan Ali Mwinyi of Tanzania, he expressed the hope that the two settlements would remain as symbols of the friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Tanzania and South Africa. It was then estimated that the monetary value of the fixed and movable assets left behind amounted to US\$ 600 million.

I shall now proceed to draw brief sketches about my personal involvement and interactions, including some landmark events, with the International Anti-Apartheid Movement in the 1960s, first in Western Europe and later, back home in Africa.

- **Holland:** I was a student at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague (1968) when I became involved with the Anti-Apartheid groups that supported the liberation struggle in Southern Africa.

Landmark: An invitation to Eduardo Mondlane (President of FRELIMO), to come to Holland and receive funds raised by the Dutch support groups did not materialize because the agents of the Portuguese colonial regime assassinated him.

- There was an "Africa Group", as well as other Anti-Apartheid formations in each of the **Nordic States** (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland) when I was a student at the Uppsala University, late 1960s. Under the leadership of the ANC representative(s), activists of the ANC participated intensively in the Anti-Apartheid programs of the Nordic support groups.

Landmarks: The visit of Joaquim Chissano, then secretary for foreign relations under FRELIMO, (now President of Mozambique), to mobilize support against Portuguese aggression. This was in 1971, when the Portuguese colonial army launched its heaviest assault code-named "Operation Gordian Knot", in which they used some of the most sophisticated weapons provided by the North Atlantic Organization (NATO), with the aim of wiping out, once and for all, the Mozambican freedom fighters from the face of the earth. As a result, the Africa groups increased their efforts at mass mobilization, leading to the creation of "Operation Day's Work" when students and pupils in schools spent weekends earning money that was then offered to liberation movements. In SOMAFCO, this cash was used for the construction of four laboratories and the Ruth First Education Orientation Centre. This was the time when the Africa groups in Sweden gave open support to Portuguese soldiers who deserted rather than go and fight Portugal's colonial wars in Africa.

- **Mozambique:** Most, if not all the Anti-Apartheid groupings I had come to know in Western Europe (British, Irish, Italian, German, French, Australian,

American, Canadian and another NGOs), converged in Mozambique following the independence of that country in 1975.

I arrived in Mozambique in 1976 to take up a position as a sociologist-oral historian to do research to recover the history of Mozambique.

From 1976 –1988, I was a member of the ANC committee in Maputo that interacted regularly and intensively with most of the Volunteer groups that offered direct and sustained support to the ANC. This included work with AMASP, Mozambique's own solidarity NGO.

Landmarks: The Matola massacres (1981), the Assassination of Ruth First, an ANC militant and Director of research at the Centro de Estudos Africanos (CEA) in Maputo (1982); the signing of the Nkomati Agreement (1984); the Assassination of Samora Machel, President of Mozambique 1996.

In 1989, I was re-deployed by the ANC to SOMAFSCO as director of the institution. By this time the college had ceased to be a boarding school: it had been transformed, almost overnight, into a community that now accommodated some 1 000 students and a population of some 2 500 adults, who had been expelled from Mozambique and Angola, after South Africa and Mozambique signed the Nkomati Accord in 1984. The AAM were there, when the ANC needed them most, to provide political and moral support.

Most of the Anti-Apartheid groups were not only represented in Dar es Salaam, but became deeply involved in the development of the infrastructure and educational facilities in Mazimbu and Dakawa, as Sherry Mclean shows.

Landmarks: These included the celebrations marking the 10 year anniversary of the establishment of SOMAFSCO, during which the then president of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, visited SOMAFSCO for the first time since its establishment, and the State visit to Tanzania and to SOMAFSCO (March 1990) of Nelson Mandela after his release from prison.

### **Nature of the relationship.**

The relationship between the Anti-Apartheid groups and the ANC was a **dynamic one**: it was characterized by passionate, intense and profound debates between the support groups and ANC counterparts worked together. I participated in many of these debates myself, in Sweden, Denmark, Mozambique, and in SOMAFSCO. It is my opinion that these philosophical and ideological debates had become even sharper and deeper in the SOMAFSCO arena. As Tikly has pointed out, "*SOMAFSCO was of enormous significance in the struggle against Apartheid. In the first instance, it was a site of struggle within the liberation movement (itself) involving contending educational (political) philosophies and ideologies. Second, SOMAFSCO features strongly in the international campaigns against Apartheid, creating 'an exceptionally wide support base, which in turn promoted the image and assisted the funding of the movement (ANC) as a whole.'*"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid: Mohammed Tikly

Sean Morrow, Brown Maaba & Lyiso Pulumani: Education in Exile: SOMAFSCO, THE anc School in Tanzania, 1978 to 1992  
HSRC Press 2004.

### **The Legacy: ‘The Spirit of SOMAFCO.’**

In July 1992, I accompanied Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, to SOMAFCO, to hand over the establishments to the Government of Tanzania.

The bonding between Tanzania and South Africa, today known as the “Spirit of SOMAFCO”, actually started early in the 1960s, when the ANC recruited 20 volunteer nurses, at the request the Tanganyika African Union (TANU), to replace departing white (British) nurses. This was at the time of Independence when the white nurses refused to serve under a black government.

In March 2002, Mohammed Tickly and I visited SOMAFCO and found that significant changes had and were taking place in the settlements: The infrastructure had not only been maintained in good condition, but the college, now accommodating 1 500 students, had now become the Mazimbu campus of Sokoine University in Morogoro.

60 km away, at Dakawa, the Ruth First Education Orientation Centre had been transformed into a thriving, co-educational secondary school with over 200 boarders. In 2001 the school was ranked sixth best, out 124 Tanzanian secondary schools. There is also a nursery school with 150 children. During our visit to the nursery, the children entertained us with a song that contained the phrase: “Friendship and Solidarity forever between Tanzania and South Africa.”

Bonding South Africa and Tanzania permanently today, are about 500 graves of exiles who died during the ANC’s presence in Tanzania. Mazimbu and Dakawa have well maintained cemeteries, visited occasionally by relatives from SA. The South African High Commissioner in Dar es Salaam assumed oversight of the cemeteries as national heritage sites. December 16 is observed, alternatively in Mazimbu and Dakawa, as a Day of Reconciliation. The observance of this day has also assumed an important part of bilateral relations.

Asante sana.

