

Unstable Biographies, Uncertain Struggle: Traveling the Terrain of Auto/Biography Expressed at Different Junctures by the Same Persons.

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Some of this text will appear in *SPEAR: The Revolutionary Moment in South Africa, 1960-64*.

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One speaks of biographies and autobiographies in the *struggle against apartheid*. The *struggle* drew on anti-apartheid dances in Bristol, instruction in Odessa and Cairo and Angola, Swedish and Soviet taxpayers, as well as the blood, incarceration, and exile of thousands of South Africans. To italicize *struggle*, certainly not to use quotation marks, is to emphasize the essential nature of this concept: *struggle* is about trying. The term, occasionally modified (needlessly) as “protracted struggle,” is very different from “our organization” or “movement,” not to mention “mass democratic movement” (MDM), the terms used to characterize the who, the subject assaying. *Struggle* says there is an effort, of a political nature, to achieve a negation: no more (racist laws). Not only is the category of the doer very capacious, indicating both the donation of life itself and an evanescent alliance of forces, but even the nature of the immediate target — public opinion, state power, time, government strategy — is left undeclared.

One might say, of course, because the evil of apartheid was so clear, the replacement was not. This argument was made internally in the ANC’s external mission. It was said men and women had not thought about how South Africa’s economy would be run after apartheid. This may also be seen however as a symptom of the apparent implausibility of success: for a very long time it seemed

impossible or at least highly unlikely that the existing array of forces would succeed. And that implausibility was at least in part articulated by the ANC in the 1970s and 1980s as follows: the aim was to stimulate an insurgency, to mobilize fifteen or eighteen million Africans and allied non-whites against three million white people. The struggle was a struggle to achieve this mobilization, and yet, the aim of the vanguard was to avoid this mobilization, — to replace it with something else, with alternative, “directed” actions. Over time, these actions were intended to generate mass participation in a structured, measured manner, which would . . . bring about change while avoiding a Syrian catastrophe.

At the nub of this problem lies the set of transformations enjoined by the state in the 1950s, culminating in the Sharpeville shootings and the State of Emergency of 1960. Many participants in this period recollect (or have recollected) key instances and colloquies in which they first tried to grasp the contours of the new era, to force their understanding of the state and of their own actions into a workable frame. Memories of such realizations, conversations, disagreements, doubtless differ with one another; yet such is the nature of the inchoate assembly of forces in the early 1960s, their (fragile) convergence on stoppages and facilitations of forms of governmental power, that individual protagonists differ even with themselves. People tell memories at different times which contradict one another, in implied ways, sometimes overtly.¹ That is the subject here.

In his late-career lecture series called “security, territory, population,” a text introduced to me by Hilton White a few years back, Michel Foucault considers the productive, “conductive” functions of the Church in his consideration of “pastoral power,” the power to shepherd for the group, and then proposes the genesis of the state in the commonality of “minister.” The key thing Foucault stresses as the defining condition of government is “circulation.” In fact Foucault defines security as a dry-run series of possible events, with contingencies, in the fluid lanes of urban circulations of people and goods (the city, the market).

In South Africa, these two aspects of “governmentality,” circulation and security, were joined in a unique way. Security was part and parcel of the circulation of

¹ Here I am influenced by Ciraj Rassool, “The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa,” about biographical narrative, each anchored to an historical conjuncture, each relived and restored at different moments later on. For Rassool, the nature of the *biographe* resides in incommensurate moments in the past, recalled and commemorated for different purposes. For us, here, the inchoate nature of *struggle* destabilizes individuals’ memories and actions in retrospect, as if they can find no resting place.

semi-free laborers. The “pastoral power” of the government, the productive governmentality that is associated with the “good” of the populace, was good for the “European” population and not the majority — and so entailed constant amendment and revision, constant security planning. Information and materials *and* laborers were circulated in networks serving white people. The idiosyncrasy of apartheid (in this sense) was that it turned the majority of the spaces of economic power into governmental sites for the facilitation of the circulation of persons and goods, its ministerial, pastoral power, and yet, it represented itself as the ostensible opponent of state-organized economies (socialism) in Africa.

The activity of sabotage brought together both those partisans who continued to advocate *appealing to the state*, asking it to alter its security arrangements, to modify its modes of governmentality, and those who advocated (or appeared to advocate) for *overthrowing* the state. Sabotage in this light had a catholic appeal both as a technique that would create signs, and by directly bringing about change (disrupting the conductive services of apartheid, which constituted the state). As a sign, it both moved toward revolutionary violence and forestalled it. The site of violence was kept off the street and most decisively out of whites’ homes, even as the state violated black people’s homes (and bodies). The rest of this paper looks at this convergence of violence and the control over violence, with narrative *memory*, and finds that an unstable focal point shimmers into view, arraying different aims about it: revolution, reform, expression, catharsis.

The sabotage targets in December 1961- August 1962 were all nodal points in the provision of governmentality: the institutions that ensured circulations or policed them. Labor licensing bureaus, to wound the urban machinery for the circulation of workers; the disruption of the rail lines, breaking tracks and switch mechanisms to hinder voluntary commuting and disrupt coal delivery to turbines; the cutting of telephone wires to prevent communication; the cutting or downing of power lines, “cutting off” or “plunging into darkness” sections of cities; the destruction of postal property (and the post office was responsible for repairing other infrastructure), breaking the chain of information-sharing at the interface of state-public engagement. (Strangely for a supposedly Communist-led move, no banks, markets, or corporate headquarters were targeted.)

1. Ruth First: the Multivalent Moment

Below is the first example of the unstable biographical moment, focused on the shift toward a containment of violence representative of (possible) further violence. Consider the following moment in Ruth First’s autobiographical

memoir of imprisonment, *117 Days*, written and published in 1965. A quite harrowing account of solitary confinement for a ninety-day term, and of being toyed with, and rearrested after release, and so on, without knowledge of the future of one's movement: the reduction of the person to a thing or item to be shifted around without discernible logic. The day of her arrest comes without warning in 1963.

Ruth First tells that she was not guilty of anything *except circulating information*: she was interested in representations of the real, as an act of free expression and information, for the use of public patrons of a library ("circulation desk"). She was not interested in affecting the real world outside the library by *using* those representations. In fact, she allowed, she had for many years been in charge of circulating information and inspiration in the struggle, in "*Fighting Talk*," a Communist journal that published many of the revolutionaries and independent African leaders of the late 1950s; but this was another version of "the library" in her account, not an incitement. She was according to her report by instinct and profession a journalist.² But she says she had no more journals to edit after *Fighting Talk* and many others had been closed down, interrupted, by the government. Now her own circulation *even within a Library* of information was interrupted: She had

come from the main reading room at the University library [as part of her apprenticeship as a librarian]. The project that week was how to choose atlases in stocking a library, and in my hand was a sheaf of new scribbled notes . . . The librarianship course was an attempt to train for a new profession. My newest set of bans prohibited me from writing . . . Fifteen years of journalism had come to an end . . .

The hand-scribbled note produced at trial, shown to have been in Ruth First's possession, is deliberately supplied in the book. Indeed it may be seen as incriminating, and Ruth also, surely, knew that her words could be read in several ways even in 1965 when she published *117 Days*. She was herself then both on the MK High Command (in actuality if not "officially," whatever that means), and was married to the supreme theoretician crafter of MK policy, Slovo;

² Alan Wieder, *Ruth First and Joe Slovo in the War against Apartheid* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013), i.e. 109 ff., has nothing to say about this dimension of Ruth First's involvement and in general elides the military dimension into vagaries, but is quite useful nonetheless. In Gillian Slovo's memoir, it is implied that Walter Sisulu had an affair with Ruth First.

MK was at that time consuming logistical information in order to maximize its ability to act successfully.

This is what Ruth First's scribbled note on her possession said (p. 3, *117 Days*):

“Pre-1961 atlases almost as obsolete for practical usage as a 1920 road map— evaluate frequency and thoroughness of revision, examine specialty maps, e.g. distribution of resources and population—look for detail plus legibility— check consistency of scale in maps of different areas—indexes—explanations of technical and cartographic terms, etc [*sic*], etc.”

Ruth First's husband, Joe Slovo, championed “Operation Mayibuye,” a preliminary scenario involving forward bases in South Africa and a *land invasion* funded and abetted by Communist countries. The plan was discovered in the Rivonia farm arrests of July, 1963, before Ruth's arrest. Among the most repeated counsels in Mandela's notes on Communism found at Rivonia is the demand that the political movement stay in close touch with the people, which was not to prove possible, but also to learn as much about the terrain, the *objective conditions*, which presented possibilities for guerilla warfare, possibly local support, and regrouping — at every juncture and in every community touched. Hence the atlases.

At the same time, Ruth herself disfavored Operation Mayibuye and “laughed out loud” in the Party meeting which first considered the plan. Thus the intersection of two meanings in a written narrative (*117 Days*) about protest and expression — a narrative of *the struggle* as one done before the “eyes” of the world, of the self, of God, of the apartheid state — an account of suffering, made more so because this account is not only by Ruth First: it is partly by the new security state, which published her hand-written note. It is a moment of the reduction of Ruth to the status of a non-author, a body, but it is also a masked record of a new counter-governmental circulation of information, aimed at revolution, perhaps, but settling on the sabotage of circulations. It is therefore an unstable point of the (auto)biography.

2. Ben Turok and the White Intellectuals

We must go backward two years or so. There was such overlap in the 1960 “working groups,” which Ben Turok confirmed, that it was not always clear which organization was okaying what activity. There were sporadic and some orchestrated episodes of terroristic violence: Ray Mhlaba calls them

“unorganized groups,” but others recalled “Paramilitary” forces in the Eastern Cape. Turok recalled that he personally had typed up on behalf of the Party Secretary at a Joint Executive meeting in 1959 the “no bail, no defense, no fine” slogan, which notion (Walter Sisulu said) was pioneered by the actions of the women in reaction to pass laws that year. We can find the same repositioning of struggle, as beside the law, not above it (disrespecting the sovereignty of the state), at various other moments, mitigated and vitiated by further pronouncements. In this instance the PAC stole the slogan and used it in their anti-pass protest at Sharpeville. (Poqo, the PAC’s violent grouping, burgeoned with quasi-millenarian recruitments to the extent that it challenged the sovereignty of the state.)

Meanwhile Moses Kotane, Ben Turok, and Mick Harmel over the five months of the 1960 “State of Emergency” drew on their Treason Trial kinship and stayed together, moving often, becoming even closer comrades, directing a significant part of the ANC’s Cape Town-centered activities, without ordering a single act of violence. In fact, Mandela would have to sell violence to Kotane as a narrowing and canalization of existing, organic violence — as, in Foucault’s terms, a security system to orchestrate and direct the otherwise unregulated flow of violence which was commencing around them. Kotane was a Christian, Rustenberg, Setswana-speaking farmer’s son (b. 1905), reaching boyhood just as the era of African expansion on the land was brought to a final close, joining the Communist Party in the 1920s, as a baker, attending school in the Soviet Union in 1931. Mick Harmel and Jack Hodgson were a decade younger, adventurous types, Mick a “boy, not a man” according to Turok and Hodgson “a boy scout” also according to Turok, who unlike many ex-Party members has spoken freely about such perceptions.

For Turok, given the advent of sabotage, it was critically important for key people to *stop sleeping in their own homes*. The transition from “general strike” to “sabotage” was in the first instance a concession that the government had disallowed the sanctity of the home — the domicile had been broken and broken again, by migrant labor, by political mobilizations against the government, and finally directly by the police, as part of the state’s new attack. Home was no longer safe.

We know that toward the close of those five months, March-August, 1960, Turok participated in another CC (Party directorate) meeting in Johannesburg in which the issue was raised of “going underground.”

[We discussed the issue of going underground.] And how long people inside are going to be inside, and you know, what about the party he [Michael Harmel] says? he said, I propose that they [e]merge. All of us got an absolute shock, because there we were absolutely panicking and living in fear, fear and trembling, . . . ³

This fear and trembling was about moving toward a position which did not respect the legitimacy of the state, i.e. coming out as the Communist Party. The Party's ad-hoc Central Committee debated and voted to "emerge," a vote that Turok makes a big deal of, seeming to feel it is of major importance, remarking that senior people including himself as "**national secretary of the congress of democrats, secretary of the alliance, executive secretariat, and here we were talking about coming out the party [sic].**" This was an "historic" move.⁴ Those voting this position did so against an angry and silent Moses Kotane. Indeed, Turok esteems Kotane more than those who agreed with his own views.

According to Turok, it was decided that he, Ben, should go back underground, since he held strong opinions on the matter, but his wife, Mary, so bitterly complained to Ivan Schermbrucker, that the command was reversed.⁵ No one wanted to stop sleeping in their beds. According to Turok, this happened in the context above, of the Communist Party "announcing" its existence, i.e. declaring that it considered illegitimate the status of the state.

Mandela as a new CC SACP member with Sisulu took it upon himself to convince Kotane to allow him to broach the idea of a military body with Chief Lutuli of the ANC, by telling the entire Congress Alliance that surely, would not it

be better to guide this [ongoing, unstoppable, gathering wave of] violence ourselves according to principles where we save lives by attacking *symbols of oppression, and not people?*⁶

³ Harmel Papers, 1993 Interview, H-13, 8.

⁴ Cullen Library, Barbara Harmel Papers, H-13, Phil Bonner, Interview with Ben Turok, 1993, p. 8.

⁵ Ben Turok, *Nothing But the Truth: Behind the ANC's Struggle Politics* (Autobiography) (Cape: Jonathan Ball, 2003), 120.

⁶ Verbatim quotation of Mandela by Norman Levy, *The Final Prize: My Life in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (Cape Town: South African History Online, 2011) (actual book) 264-5.

As I have argued elsewhere, however, it is hard to see how Mandela and Slovo saw themselves as anything except revolutionaries at this juncture, bent on midwiving a guerilla conflict, helped by the refurbished alliance with the SACP and soon Soviet funding. The targets were to be more than symbolic, and yet Mandela made this appeal, arguing that he would restrict, rather than facilitate, violence by shepherding MK. This action would be represented as purely reactive in MK's first statement: the Treason Trialist and Communist Norman Levy glue pot in hand helped put up the bills in Johannesburg the night of December 16th, and he them:

The choice is not ours; it has been made by the Nationalist government which has rejected . . . every . . . peaceful demand . . . with force and yet more force!"⁷

Turok in his book then relates the well known story of his botched attempt with Jack Hodgson to put a bomb in the Rissik Street Post Office, his subsequent return home after having been spotted, his arrest, and his imprisonment for almost three years, followed by his fleeing the country on foot to Botswana and then his movement to Zambia.

In an interview given in 1993, Mary Turok explains that Ben was told he could and should leave but *not with an exit permit* and that he should leave and then soon return *with a new face*, having undergone plastic surgery abroad. These were Bram Fischer's instructions.⁸ Turok left making written notes about supply lines and other military matters, but his intelligence was ignored, and Joe Jele (a relatively junior figure) let Turok know in advance that all was not well with the camps in Tanzania even in 1965. When Turok finally got to Lusaka, or Dar in another version, he encountered Moses Kotane, his old friend and protagonist, his colleague he had hidden out with for months in 1960, during the State of Emergency.

[T]o my dismay [Moses] was very cool and barely greeted me. He was then based in Morogoro, as were the other senior figures, and we treasurer of the ANC and commissar in chief of MK. I subsequently learned that Moses unaccountably held me partially responsible for the debacle of the turn to

⁷ Levy, 266.

⁸ Cullen Library, Karis Papers, Ben and Mary Turok, Johannesburg, Sept. 26, 1993.

violence and for the disaster of Rivonia, which was ironic given my actual role. . . . Moses was somewhat of a changed person . . .⁹

In his book, published after the millennium, Turok thinks that he had a memorable encounter with Kotane after December 16th, 1961, in which Kotane said, **“Don’t you know that if you throw stones at people’s windows they are likely to come out and break your neck? So don’t do it unless you know what you are doing and what the consequences are likely to be.”**¹⁰ But only ten years before, in the 1993 interview with Phil Bonner, Turok had located this key discussion in the meeting that decided the *reemergence of the Party*, long before Dec. 16, 1961, in fact in May, 1960, the same meeting that occasioned the wrenching discussion of hiding away from home or not,

[at which meeting Kotane] said look, when you throw a stone at people, they are going to come back and break your windows, so before you throw a stone, just think about what you are going to do. He says, are we in a position strong enough to hold it, are we going to be able to survive. The backlash will be fantastic. The police will go mad.¹¹

So again, it is the emergence of the Party in 1960 that at least Party members imagined was the key moment in turning toward insurgency: the result was the destruction of the home (windows). But. We have to consult the records of Brian Bunting interviewing Ben Turok for his biography of Moses Kotane, to see another, similar version, recorded twenty years earlier, much closer to the events in question. Directly after their night of broken windows and severed phone lines, courtesy of Jack Hodgson’s poor planning — Turok’s Rissik Street sabotage attempt, after which a reporter had telephoned him at home to say “I know you did it” — Kotane accosted Turok, hearing about the mishap, and said, **“Why do you do stupid things like this?”**

If you break people’s windows they’re going to come out and break your neck, so don’t do it unless you know what you are doing.¹²

⁹ Turok, *Nothing*, 120, 211.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹¹ Harmel Papers, 1993 Interview with Turok, 8.

¹² Mayibuye Center, Univ. of the Western Cape, Bunting Papers, interviews with Ben Turok.

By 1963, the SACP and MK had orchestrated about two hundred actions, and had organized a routinized subvention of hundreds of thousands of USD per year from Communist countries. They followed the PAC (which had sent men to Egypt, Ghana, and perhaps China by late 1960) and begun outsourcing the training and discipline of their soldiery to East Germany and the Soviet Union. There were still amateur attempts made on South African soil, and they would be for many years, but events created a new paradigm: military engagements would stimulate a controlled (by the “vanguard”) uprising. Kotane remained the ANC’s treasurer.

When Turok (speaking in 1973) got to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to meet with Kotane, in 1965, Kotane was “**cold as cold could be: I remember it as yesterday.**” Try as he might, Turok could not get Kotane to sit down with him. It got so bad that Kotane would not acknowledge Turok’s presence; Turok felt shunned. So Turok waited. A year passed and still few people spoke to him. He was dejected. Turok also knew that Duma Nokwe, the first head of security for the post-1960 MK, suspected him of working for the South African Police.

Eventually Moses Kotane and Ben Turok became friendly once again, over a year later, and Moses Kotane finally spoke to Turok frankly: he blamed Turok and whites in the “Umkhonto movement” for the disastrous state of affairs in 1966; and he blamed Turok in particular; he felt it was Turok and other of the white intellectuals (Harmel, Hodgson, Slovo) who misled them into the disastrous militaristic policy.

Turok complained to Kotane of the “decay” at the center of MK and depicted an MK cadre protective only of Joe Modise and as “horrible places.” “**They should have gone back [already],**” Turok said he thought to himself in 1966.

Turok complained in particular that the Party could not hold education classes for cadres in East Africa: they were not allowed. Kotane asked Turok to draw up a plan of action for changing the situation, to argue for it. Kotane then read his report and drafted a reply to Turok, torpedoing the idea of any independent Party activity, under any circumstances, in ANC/MK camps. The ANC itself as currently constituted would be the sole repository of ideology; any CP activity risked expulsion from Tanzania and Zambia. Moses was himself the Party. Turok told Bunting he felt that “**History will condemn the Party . . . and [you] Moses for that.**” Moses Kotane was a great revolutionary but he “**went too far.**”

Apparently Moses Mabhida agreed with Turok but it took Joe Slovo's personal intervention, and several years of stalemate, for the SACP to once "emerge" as a separate entity in the camps, and the result was the expulsion of MK from Tanzania into the Soviet Union via airlifts.

So here I must provisionally register our view of the landscape of competing representations of (arguably) the key moment of transition in 1960–1, rejecting the sovereignty of the South African state, in bits and pieces, worriedly. At various moments various accessible (auto)biographies register different subjective selves around this black hole of interpretive effort. As a result the shift to violent attacks on South African governmentality are seen as attempts to stifle, command, and direct organic eruptions of violence, all at once: unstable characterizations.

3. Mandela: Moments to Forget or Forgo

For a final instability in biography we will look at Nelson Mandela. For that purpose I submit two scenes, with verbatim quotations. The first comes from a file I fortuitously discovered, unknown until now. I am keeping the provenance secret but I vouch for the accuracy of the quotations below.

NELSON MANDELA

I married the plaintiff in 1944. Trouble between us started in 1946 as a result of her insistence that I should resign from the African National Congress. Her hostility to the Congress created constant friction between us and became a source of heated arguments and quarrels throughout our married life.

Mandela at the time is a big man, clean shaven, a part in his hair, speaking English with a clipped, almost Afrikaans abbreviation of the Nguni lilt. What he is saying is this: his politics cleaved apart his home life.

MANDELA

During 1953 her attitude changed and she began to show interest so much so that she attended meetings and was even elected to the executive committee of the Transvaal branch of the A.N.C. Women's

League.¹³ But this change was short-lived because early in 1955 she again developed hatred from the organization and violently objected to visits to the house of Congressites.

So, she joined the ANC network to get closer to her husband, who nonetheless continued to . . .

During 1953, Mrs. Nji, a close friend and neighbor, worked as typist for my firm. One morning I gave [Mrs. Nji] . . . a lift in my car to work. In the presence of Dr. Nji, Alfred Hutchinson and several other people, the plaintiff created a scene by storming into the car, ordering Mrs. Nji to leave the front seat of the car and by publicly abusing me for giving her a lift . . .

That courtroom. One imagines that blond wood blocky furniture of the 1950s, but that cannot be right. It must have been dark, burled wood and wide white walls with a Union Jack still there, well dressed black men and women sitting on the wooden benches; Mandela would be seated behind a swinging panel, his head and shoulders visible. We know there was a stenographer.

MANDELA

. . . [Furthermore] [i]n the course of my political activities I very often work together with Lilian Ngoyi. . . . The Plaintiff [Mrs. Mandela] informed me that she had strong suspicions that I was in love with Lilian and threatened to report the matter of the Executive Committee of the Congress she persisted in making these false accusations . . .

Then comes a sensational charge:

MANDELA

13 Indeed Evelyn Mandela is so listed in the Women's League's rosters, consulted as part of the Treason Trial material at the South African National Archives in Pretoria (Tshwane).

Early in 1955 Lilian left the country for overseas and the plaintiff [Mandela' wife] saw her off at Park Station. Shortly thereafter a certain Edward Majola, an ex-detective who presently works as a private detective and is married to my cousin, informed me that the plaintiff had asked him to report to the South African Police in Orlando that Lilian was leaving the country without a passport.

The informal network of kin in Johannesburg permitted Mandela to learn that his wife was informing the state's apparatus that Lillian Ngoyi, one of his possible lovers, was entering the ANC's circulation of guerilla fighters and adjuncts and escaping the country. Nelson's wife tried to arrange the arrest of an ANC operative because she was too close to Nelson. Nelson informs the court of Evelyn's connection to the state vis-à-vis his home life, as evidence of the permanent disconnect in that life.

The political entered the personal; now the political was invited in again, and informed on itself. The end came with an act already described obliquely by Anthony Sampson in *Young Mandela* but here in Mandela's voice:

MANDELA

[6th of February, 1956] she reached out for a stove poker and I feared that she would injure me. I had a baby [Makgatho, their son] in my arms. I grabbed her in the throat with one hand and I dragged her away from the stove into the bedroom, put the baby on the bed[,] and pushed her out of the house and locked the door.

Mandela was a "fitness" fanatic, as Wulfie Kodesh and others confirmed, "running" in place for an hour every morning. He was a bit, Ben Turok says, like "a coiled spring." As his wife made as if to kill him, one must conclude he exercised restraint: but it is not a simple thing to get a hot poker away from someone with one hand, an then grab the assailant by the throat, all while cradling a child. We lack Evelyn's testimony.

One also understands, now, that his wife was justifiably angry at Mandela's infidelities (also hinted at by Joe Matthews in his interview for SADET, online). If his lovers were connected to his work, which seems very likely, he needed to

disentangle himself from an unsuccessful marriage linked to his work: Evelyn was a relation of Walter Sisulu — his niece. What is significant here is that Mandela as plaintiff opened up his domestic life to various partners and then permitted the state to hold divorce proceedings in which he did not admit to any extramarital affairs: he was still *appealing to the state* as an authority over his household in 1956, in order to free himself.

Mandela relates three serial moments in describing his thinking about violence. The first occurs before the divorce, in June, 1953, at the Odin cinema, in a big meeting to discuss action against the Sophiatown removals, with policemen present, Mandela diverted the crowd's energy *away from violence*, by singing; then, the night before the main removals, Mandela (and others) had Joe Modise tell five hundred expectant young ANC members at a meeting to *dampen* energies verging on acts of violence that "would have been a disaster"; and lastly, Mandela saw all the ANC's nonviolent actions fail, and Sophiatown disappear around him, because renters had different interests than premises-owners. No housing options were offered to them. These acts of *preventing* revolutionary violence (as a vanguard) in view of the destruction of domiciles had all failed. This seemingly incongruously convinced Mandela (with the onset of removals) there was "no alternative to armed and violent resistance" as designed by a vanguard.¹⁴ At the same time as he invited the state to register the end of his domestic life, in other words, the incapacity of activists against the state's destruction of domiciles had convinced him of the wisdom of violence against the state.

Four years later, Mandela operated in stolid opposition to the sovereignty of the state. Mandela has been training with the Ethiopians and perhaps the Israeli agents attached to the Addis embassy who had trained the staff. He then traversed Africa connecting with African leaders. In this scene, Mandela is in Algiers (V. Shubin: "Mandela was never in Algeria. He met in Morocco with Algerian commanders"), with Denis Goldberg, whose words suggest Goldberg's presence, early in January or February, 1962.

¹⁴ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994) (hardcover), 136, 143, 144. Mandela in his diary (Nelson Mandela Foundation of Memory) meets the Algerians in Morocco.

Mandela speaks now with an FLN commander. He asks Mandela how his military situation was shaping up. This is Mandela's and the commander's dialog as Goldberg recalled it twenty-eight years later.

["It [is] the Cuban example that most impress[es me]: [twelve] men landing in a boat, hiding up in the mountains.["]

And the Algerian said: ["Have you looked at a map of South Africa?["]

["Yes,["] said Nelson, ["I] kno[w] the country.["]

["Well, where would you hide?["]

["]. . . in the end the only place would be the mountains of Lesotho.["]

And the Algerian colonel said: ["And what will you do from there? There's not a population centre or a key area of the country within reach. It's a huge country. And you must recognize the military and air potential of the S[outh] A[frican] regime as against Batista. So *you can't take that as an example.*["] [Nelson afterwards said, "We have] to think very carefully, . . . we couldn't just follow other people's examples."¹⁵

Cuba continued to exert a tremendous influence over the revolutionary African Nationalist Communists. Mandela carefully read Che Guevara's memoir. Mandela told Moses Kotane that they should adopt the Cuban "*foco*" model. And here was the most experienced commander in an anticolonial struggle in conditions that struck Mandela as akin to South Africa, telling Mandela: *you cannot succeed* with your *foco* strategy.¹⁶ Yet the idea remained to "create the conditions for" a general uprising as per Che, and the Cuban example was held dear. Goldberg occupies an interim position: a fierce protagonist of violence, he several times expressed doubts to others that armed *struggle* could topple the state. For him, but not for Mandela, this Moroccan or Algerian interaction was something to recall. It was not, like Mandela's Party membership was not, something to put in an autobiography, however, because it did not speak directly to the well-springs of MK: state attacks, confinements, illegalities, Africans'

15 Howard Barrell interview with Denis Goldberg, London, Feb. 7, 1990, Cullen Library, p. 191; my italics; I have put hard returns between lines and converted the third person to the first person for Mandela.

16 Thula Simpson in his recent Ph.D., "The People's War," synthesizes a consensus version of this account, identifying the (probable) Algerian commander. The point there is Mandela's perspicacity in consulting diverse others (p. ?).

control, the alliance's suppression of racial war, the production of symbolism. The dialog did cast a shadow over the tactical argument that sabotage would propel South Africa toward mass (racial!) war¹⁷ but as we have seen racial war was both the Scylla and Charybdis of the turn to violence, threatened and forestalled at the same time.

The state lost its claim to legitimate sovereignty just as it criminalized its reformers. Nonetheless, the targeting of "apartheid" was always something different from the targeting of the state. To an extent this contradiction was resolved or accommodated in the activity of sabotage, insofar as the aim was the disruption of circulations, of governmentality. An instability of purpose permitted the world anti-apartheid struggle to remain on track, but in turn permits us only flashes of illumination, and not yet a cinematic picture, of key decisions, via (auto)biography. There was and is single shift on which to focus: there is a consortium of opinions and strategies, an ambivalence with regard to the positive outcome of activities. Such ambivalence, of a peculiarly South African character, resided in the very heart of the *struggle* and there will be more to be said about it anon.

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4 Feb. 2014

¹⁷ *Long Walk to Freedom*. This negative lesson would be on p. 259-60, but it is not.