

Reddy Mampane (aka 'Reddy Mazimba')

ANC—Chief Representative to Tanzania and to Zimbabwe
National Director of the African Development Corporation
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Tor Sellström: When and why did you leave South Africa?

Reddy Mampane: I came to ANC in 1959, when I was working in a hotel in Pretoria. Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) was formed in 1961 and I became a MK member in December 1962. I took part in some reconnaissance of the places to be sabotaged, specifically the synagogue where Mandela was sentenced to five years imprisonment in November 1962. My unit went and sabotaged it, but I did not take part in that operation.

In December 1962, when we were planning to sabotage the synagogue, the person who was responsible for taking ANC people out of the country—together with Joe Modise, the present Minister of Defence—came to collect me. He said: 'Look, you are going!' So I left on 7 January 1963. We were supposed to go for training and then come back and continue the armed struggle. From South Africa we went to Tanganyika and from Tanganyika to train in Algeria for eight months. When we were about to finish the training, we were told that the MK High Command had been arrested and, therefore, that we could not go back home. What should we do and where should we go? We first went back to Tanganyika, but it soon

became clear that we really could not go to South Africa. The whole machinery which was supposed to receive us was completely destroyed. Many people had been arrested, some had been killed, some driven into exile and others had gone underground. There was nothing left. Then, in January 1964—immediately after New Year's Day—we left for the Soviet Union for further military training and political education.

TS: Did you go with Chris Hani in the group that went to Odessa?

RM: Yes, to attend the Odessa Military Academy. Joe Modise was our Commander and Moses Mabhida, the former Secretary General of the South African Communist Party, our National Commissar. People like Chris Hani and others were in our group in Odessa. We finished in October 1964 and went back to Tanzania.

TS: Did you meet Che Guevara there?

RM: No, I met Che Guevara when we were training in Algeria. We also saw the Algerian President, who came to our camp. Che Guevara also went there. We were training in a small town not very far from the border with Morocco.

TS: When did you come into contact with the Nordic countries for the first time?

RM: If I remember correctly, it was when I was in Dar es Salaam. I was the administrative secretary at the ANC office. I started as an administrative secretary in 1973. My task was to deal with applications for travel documents for the ANC people leaving Tanzania and to organize their visas from the embassies concerned. I also had to apply for air tickets for the ANC people. We worked with an airline which belonged to a Tanzanian. I had an account with him. I applied for return or single tickets and at the end of the month the ANC Treasury would pay him. These were my activities, besides the normal administrative work in the office, filing and that kind of thing.

Through my activities, I came into contact with the embassies of the Scandinavian countries. In the Swedish embassy, I later became very close to Anna Runeborg. She was the person who was dealing with me directly all the time.

In 1976, I was promoted to ANC Chief Representative in Tanzania. At that time, we had a lot of young people coming to Dar es Salaam as a result of the Soweto uprising. I would go to the airport and divide them. Those who went for military training on one side and those who went for academic studies on the other. The accommodation was also separate. The military people had two places where they stayed and the students were put up in guest houses or hotels in town. That activity made me be more in contact with Anna Runeborg. Thomas Nkobi, our Treasurer General, gave me instructions to organize charter flights to fly our MK personnel out of Tanzania to Angola. I would then go to Anna and say: 'Anna, here is my problem'. She was helpful all the time. She was a fantastic person.

At that time, there was a war in the Shaba province of Zaire. From Dar es Salaam to Luanda you had to fly over the Shaba province. But we decided that the flight must go from Dar es Salaam to Ndola, Zambia. We would go down there and from Ndola we would continue to Angola to avoid the Shaba province. That added to the price, but SIDA covered the costs. Everything, the flights and everything.

TS: When did you finally leave Tanzania?

RM: I left in 1982.

TS: So you were in Tanzania during the construction of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, SOMAFSCO? How did SOMAFSCO come about?

RM: Yes. In fact, the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College came into being as follows: We had a problem with a lot of South African children in Dar es Salaam. Dar es Salaam was the capital and the Tanzanian authorities became sensitive about the fact that there were children all over the place. You know how young people behave. We therefore had to find a place for them and that was my responsibility as Chief Representative. We transported the children from Dar es Salaam to a place near to Morogoro, where ANC had a plot. However, that place was adjacent to a military base of the Tanzanian defence force. It did not take very long before it became a serious problem. The Tanzanian military got so excited by seeing these children from Soweto. They opened the gates and the children would go there at weekends to see films etc., interfering with security and the normal administrative work.

Together with a comrade of mine I then went to the Tanzanian Regional Commissioner in Morogoro, Anna Abdallah, and told her that we needed a bigger place for our children. Anna delegated it to some of her colleagues and they took us to Mazimbu. Mazimbu was an old sisal estate with some dilapidated houses. There was no other place. We realized that this was the place and that we must do something about it. I sent a report to the ANC Headquarters in Lusaka, informing them that the Tanzanian government had given us a place in Mazimbu. It was funny. My ANC name was Reddy Mazimba and the place was Mazimbu. After that, many people wanted to address me as Mazimbu.

ANC replied that it was very important that we built a school at that place. Now, there was no water and no electricity. Just bush. And some old houses without doors or windows. People could not live there. The leadership in Lusaka then called Dennis Oswald, who had just finished his studies in architecture in the German Democratic Republic. When he came to Tanzania I showed him the place and said: 'Dennis, do something!' He studied those vacant old houses, called the students to clean the place, renovated the houses and, finally, we moved the students into those very same

old houses. Nicely renovated, with doors and windows and so forth. But there was no electricity, so we used candles. And no water. There was a truck which would transport water for cooking, washing and drinking in drums from Morogoro. Life was very difficult for the first group of students at Mazimbu. But that is how SOMAFCO came into being.

TS: Did you get any support from the Nordic countries for SOMAFCO at that early stage?

RM: Yes, there was a Danish fellow—Lars Larsen from DanChurchAid—who was working for the Tanzanian government, building a school in Morogoro. He had already finished his contract when Dennis said to me: 'I wonder if he can come and work for ANC?' I went to the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs, but they said that it was not possible. He had been sent to work under the Tanzanian government and once his contract was over he must go back to Denmark. I said: 'But we need him to build our school'. After some time, the Tanzanian government normalized all the papers and said to me: 'Now, he is working for ANC!' It was the first case where a person who had been working in Tanzania came to work for ANC.

Lars did the first drawings of the buildings at Mazimbu with Dennis. We laid the first foundation on 8 January 1979, which, of course, also was the date on which ANC was founded in 1912. We invited people from Dar es Salaam—diplomats and whoever wanted to come—and had a big meeting.

TS: How could you be confident that the Nordic aid workers were not going to run away with all your plans to the enemy? Did you feel that close to them?

RM: My experience from working with them in Dar es Salaam was that I could trust them. If people said that they were from a Scandinavian country—Norway, Sweden or Denmark—I saw them as part and parcel of our big detachment in the struggle, occupying different trenches to uproot apartheid in our country. That was how I looked at them. Of course, I had to say to myself: 'If one of them turns to the enemy, it will be a problem'. But I addressed myself to people who I trusted. And I must say that those people did their very best. They did a fantastic job.

Mazimbu was named the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College—SOMAFCO for short—after an MK member who was trained

and infiltrated into South Africa to carry out MK activities. He was captured and hanged by the South African regime. The school was named as a tribute to his contribution to the struggle of our people. It was very close to our hearts.

People from the different Scandinavian countries participated directly in the building of Mazimbu, through training, working in agriculture, house-building, teaching and in the medical field. Our medicines came from Scandinavia, as well as clothing and food for the people. I think that 99 per cent of the food-stuff that we bought came from Scandinavia. SIDA, in particular, shouldered the burden. We even built a hospital with two operating theatres. It was built with money and expertise from the Scandinavian countries. The Tanzanian people had never experienced that kind of thing. They could not understand why we had so much confidence in the Scandinavians, who were white!

You must understand that ANC also had problems with some African states, Tanzania in particular. They were saying: 'You people say that you are fighting against a white regime, but you have white people in your ranks. And now you allow whites from other countries to come and help you'. They saw PAC people as the true freedom fighters, because PAC maintained that black is black and did not welcome any whites.

The Tanzanians were very close to PAC for a long time. In fact, we were all chucked out of Tanzania in 1970. ANC was expelled from the country! The background was a coup attempt, organized by the former Tanzanian Foreign Minister Oscar Kambona, who tried to overthrow Nyerere. In the trial, the PAC leader Potlako Leballo was the key witness of the Tanzanian government and he said that ANC was responsible for part of that attempted coup! We were expelled! Out of Tanzania! In fact, the Tanzanian government wanted us to go to a refugee camp, but our leadership refused, saying that we were not refugees, but freedom fighters. ANC leaders like J. B. Marks, Moses Kotane, Oliver Tambo and others said: 'No!' Then they went to the Soviet Union and the Soviets came to Tanzania to pick us all up. We were taken to various parts of the Soviet Union while the leadership tried to negotiate a solution to the problem.

When I became the ANC Chief Representative in 1976, our relationship with Tanzania was not yet good at all. But then we had this influx of people from the Scandinavian countries, coming to help not PAC, but ANC.

TS: Did that have any influence over the Tanzanian government?

RM: Yes, it had an influence. They realized that ANC could and did work. PAC could not deliver. There was quite a number of them. A lot of money was given to PAC, but there were no results.

When people from Europe came to help ANC we had to get permits for them through the Prime Minister's Office. Eventually, we established a routine between ourselves, looking into the security aspects of the visitors. I was responsible for that, because the Tanzanians did not know them. The first people who went to Mazimbu were from the Holland Committee on Southern Africa. They went there with their cameras and everything. They were the first people to photograph the place. At that time, we had not yet put this routine in place. I had just told the Tanzanians that I had people going to Mazimbu. However, Mazimbu is adjacent to military installations and when the Tanzanians saw them taking photographs they arrested them and confiscated their cameras. I was phoned from Morogoro: 'Hey Reddy! There is something wrong here. People are arrested!' I contacted the Prime Minister's Office and said: 'My colleagues are arrested! I told you that they were going there'. Then they phoned Morogoro to release our visitors, give them back their cameras and not spoil their photos. We had to explain that those photos were very important. They were taken to raise funds to build SOMAFCO.

One person who from the beginning understood the importance of Mazimbu was Anna Abdallah. She took a very active part in seeing to it that Mazimbu was built. She planted a tree of friendship there. It is a big tree today. At one time she led a Tanzanian delegation to the Nordic countries, including Finland. Wherever she went, she placed Mazimbu on the world map. She really became an ambassador for ANC, telling people about Mazimbu, what we needed there, why it was important to the liberation struggle in South Africa and how important it was to the Tanzanian people. From time to time, she would just take a car,

come to Mazimbu and spend the afternoon there.

After some time, the ANC leadership in Lusaka said that Mazimbu was supposed to be an educational institution and that ANC people who had no connection with education should not be there. They told me: 'Ask the Tanzanian government to give us another area where we can settle this people'. I went to the Ministry of Home Affairs. I had very good relations with them. I forwarded the request and they understood, saying that we must go to Morogoro to meet Anna Abdallah. She listened and said: 'Well, there is an area in Dakawa. There are a lot of fields there which are not utilized'. They were old farms which had belonged to some Indians years back. They had all left Tanzania for Canada and so forth. The farms were not used. Of course, the Masai were using that area to graze their herds.

We drove there and visited the police station of that area. The lieutenant was an agriculturist by profession. We explained what we were looking for and he said: 'Fine, let us go!' He took us to an area not very far from where he lived. He said: 'You can take this area if you like it'. A big piece of land. Very big. He just said: 'This is somewhere to move around. You can take it'. He gave us the maps and we went back to mama Abdallah. She was very happy.

I consulted Dennis Oswald and we went with the administration of Mazimbu to have a look at the place. After that, we took some *umgwenya* there, MK people who left South Africa for training in the 1960s. Like myself. We call ourselves *umgwenya*, that is, veterans of the Luthuli detachment from the Wankie Operation. We assembled some of them, collected torches, food and so on and pitched up our tents in the area, demarcating the place. That is how Dakawa came into being. It was called the Dakawa settlement area.

Later on, people from Mazimbu would go to Dakawa and take part in the agricultural activities. Mazimbu had a big farm, which was managed by Niels from Denmark. We had cattle, goats and so forth. Mazimbu was beautiful and Dakawa also became beautiful.

Mazimbu, in particular, drew people from all over the world. It was important for ANC. We would encourage international people to go there, look at it and see what ANC and its friends—the Scandinavian and other countries who were supporting our struggle—could do

under normal circumstances. But, in the beginning we also had problems, because the South African government had recruited a lot of young children as spies and infiltrated them among the students and also within MK. In Mazimbu itself, there was a lot of enemy agents. I took part in arresting them, to the extent that when my Volvo came to Mazimbu people would say: 'Now, who is going to be picked up?' We had to arrest a lot of them.

TS: Were any Scandinavians involved in any funny business there?

RM: No, not at all. In Mazimbu, we then organised a Directorate and developed an administrative policy for the settlement, because it was not only a school. We had a crèche, where expecting young mothers stayed, nurseries, pre-schools and primary, secondary and adult education. There was also a garment factory, a sewing factory and a welding factory, as well as a very big carpentry, all with sophisticated machines.

TS: You produced your own furniture?

RM: Yes, beautiful furniture for the school. Doors, tables, chairs, you name it. We also had a farm with all the necessary equipment. It was a very big place, with pigs, cows, goats and chickens. We had to set up a proper management structure to run the operations. It was also responsible for Dakawa.

TS: When the first SIDA allocation to the ANC was given in 1973, Thomas Nkobi wrote a letter of acknowledgement. Thanking Sweden for the contribution, he said that the ANC had a policy of becoming self-sufficient in exile and that they were going to set up their own farms.

RM: Yes, that is exactly what happened. Mazimbu and Dakawa made the ANC self-sufficient. We also had a big farm in Lusaka, which was supplying our community in Zambia. ANC was really a government in exile.

TS: The development plan for Dakawa was a ten-year plan, financed and drawn up by Norway. Those were the real dark days of the struggle. You had to plan for a long exile?

RM: During those days it was very difficult to visualize when one would be back in South Africa. There were no signs at all. The horizon was just dark. The regime was more and more intransigent, more and more brutal. I think that most of us were saying that: 'Well, we have to make conditions better for ourselves here in exile'. And that that is how people came to be self-sufficient.

TS: Did you then go to Zambia?

RM: In 1981, when I was still the ANC Chief Representative in Tanzania, I was sent together with other colleagues for training in security and intelligence in Moscow. When we came back, I was appointed Head of ANC's Security Division and transferred to our headquarters in Lusaka.

I was posted as ANC Chief Representative to Zimbabwe in 1985. In the beginning, I had difficulties there. The ZANU government was looking at ANC as people who were still conniving with ZAPU. The background was that ANC had been close to ZAPU and that PAC was close to ZANU. In 1967, we formed an alliance with ZAPU and fought in Rhodesia with them. Our aim was to use Rhodesia to cross into South Africa, but in Rhodesia we had to fight when we were confronted. That is the reason why we could not use Botswana, where we would not have fought if the Botswana police had confronted us.

Now, if they saw me with ZAPU people, they would think that I was up to something, but I said: 'These are my colleagues. We know each other. I cannot run away when I see them. As ANC we are dealing with the ZANU government'.

In 1985, there was a serious problem in Matabeleland, so it was very difficult. The Zimbabweans preferred PAC. There was no rally or meeting that I organized without having to invite PAC. They made it into a rule: if I organized a rally, I must also invite PAC. One of their aims was to bring PAC to the people and only ANC could do that. One day I spoke to the ZANU leader Didymus Mutasa about the relationship between ZANU and ANC. I said to him: 'It is important that our relationship is cemented. To do that we have to come together, have a meeting and discuss'. He agreed and the Secretariat of ZANU agreed. I then informed our leadership in Lusaka. They also agreed and the meeting took place in Harare. Our delegation was led by O. R. Tambo. After that meeting, the relationship with ZANU became excellent.

TS: Did you know that the government of Sweden and SIDA constantly were discussing the question of an ANC representation in Harare with the Zimbabwean government and with ZANU?

RM: Yes, that is why I was sent to Harare. I remember it very well. It was part of the en-

deavour to help us to do away with apartheid. In fact, the Zimbabweans did not want SIDA to give us aid without also assisting PAC. But SIDA said: 'It is our right to decide which side we wish to support'. The Scandinavian countries did a lot. They knew their political line and they knew who to support.

After that first meeting between ANC and ZANU, another meeting took place between Joe Modise, our Army Commander, and Rex Nhongo, the Commander of the Zimbabwean armed forces, to discuss how Zimbabwe could assist us to cross the border into South Africa. A decision was taken that one of the bedrooms in my house should be turned into an armoury. A truck would leave Lusaka full of weapons and drive to Harare and I would tell the Zimbabweans that it was coming. There would not be any search. It would get into my yard and off-load all kinds of weapons and explosives into the bedroom. My house was guarded by the Zimbabwean para-military around the clock. It was used like that, because the Zimbabweans said that nobody would expect to find weapons in the Chief Representative's house.

TS: In the 1980s, about one third of the Swedish support to ANC went to the Home Front. Do you think that it was important for the reorganization of the struggle inside South Africa?

RM: I have no doubt that the SIDA support which was channelled to the Home Front had a tremendous impact on the reorganization of the internal structures. In order to create an underground machinery, we had to get cadres into the country, organize the people and set up good communications. To do this, we needed funds and the money which was channelled by Sweden represented, I think, the bulk of the resources which assisted ANC to be able to operate. It supported people who were doing ANC political work inside the country.

TS: 'Pik' Botha has implied that the Swedish support was not only humanitarian, but also military. Did ANC receive any military support from the Nordic countries?

RM: I know very well that the Nordic countries did not give ANC weapons. They did not. They gave us humanitarian assistance, including food, medicines and so forth, but also funds to make it possible to travel, to go into the country and to organize the machinery

there. But no weapons. That I know for a fact, because I was dealing with that, especially when I was in Zimbabwe as the ANC Chief Representative.

However, the South African regime tried to imply that the Nordic countries were giving ANC weapons. For example, when our office in Harare was bombed a very interesting thing happened. This was on 19 May 1986, at one o'clock in the morning, and the very same day *The Citizen* in Johannesburg wrote that Reddy Mazimba—they said 'Jan Mampane, who is known as 'Reddy Mazimba', the Chief Representative of ANC, responsible for the mines that broke the legs of whites in Northern Transvaal'—was dead! They took that to the Swedish legation in Pretoria, which transmitted it to the Swedish embassy in Harare. The ambassador called me and said: 'Do you see how they talk about us down there?' This was a way of saying that 'Sweden gives ANC weapons'. But the Scandinavian countries made it very clear that their money could not buy weapons. It was for humanitarian use. No weapons!

TS: Do you think that there were conditions tied to the Nordic assistance or was it given without strings attached?

RM: Well, as far as I know there were no strings attached. There was a commitment by the Scandinavian people to assist our people, who were ready to sacrifice their lives to eradicate apartheid in South Africa. The Nordic countries believed that apartheid had no place on our planet and they really demonstrated it, not only in words, but practically. If there had been strings attached, today they would be saying: 'OK, we gave you aid, so now you have to give us this'. But there is no such thing. They were always willing to support. They made the struggle of the people of South Africa their own struggle. So, there were no strings attached whatsoever.

TS: Were the responsible DANIDA, FINNIDA, NORAD and SIDA officials well informed about your real needs? Did you have a constructive dialogue with them?

RM: Yes, they were very well informed about our needs and about the situation of our struggle. I think that there was transparency between ourselves and the leaders of the Scandinavian countries. They became part and parcel of ourselves and in that way they were

able to give us assistance. They knew exactly where A met B.

TS: You mentioned the bombing of the ANC office in Harare in 1986. What happened?

RM: We always used to get some information that BOSS was coming to raid us and took precautions. That day, at eight o'clock in the evening, we got the same information. Alfred Nzo, our Secretary General and presently Minister of Foreign Affairs, was in Harare and I explained the situation to him. We went around to all our residences and told the people to get out of the houses. Some of them went to sleep at the police station and so forth. Nzo had a flat in town and I stayed with him. At one o'clock, we heard an explosion. We were not far from the office. We woke up without an office! We then drove to Ashdown Park, where the house was also finished.

In this situation, who was on our side? Who was on the side of the South African liberation movement, ANC? The Scandinavian countries—SIDA, in particular, the Norwegian People's Aid, NORAD and others. The Lu-

theran World Federation in Harare even made space at their office to let us operate from there.

Other countries were not there. They were on the side of the regime. Countries like the United States, Britain and so on, oiling apartheid to continue murdering our people. They made a lot of money through apartheid at the expense of the lives of our people.

TS: Did you see what the German Chancellor Helmuth Kohl said to the South African Parliament in Cape Town last week? He said that even in the darkest days, German companies were here to help the oppressed?

RM: It is very bad. It is criminal, in fact. People like this—who were oiling the apartheid regime to continue the oppression of our people—now come and tell us that they are proud that they were busting the sanctions' policy. They did not care about our people. Sanctions was our weapon against apartheid and they did not care about that. Now they come here and boast. It is very bad. It really worries me.