

interview

In an interview with the 'Sentinel' Dali Tambo, son of Oliver Tambo - President of the African National Congress, calls for the immediate application of all peaceful means to lessen the bloodshed involved in bringing apartheid to an end.

The theme of this year's Edinburgh International Festival was the "Auld Alliance" between Scotland and France. The most important cultural alliance which I witnessed during the Festival took place on the Fringe. It wasn't an "Auld Alliance". In historical terms it was a relatively new alliance; and definitely not on the "fringe" of human importance. It was an alliance between AMANDLA (the cultural ensemble of the African National Congress of South Africa, ANC) and their audience at the Assembly Rooms - an alliance in total abhorrence and condemnation of apartheid.

Apartheid is a system in which people are discriminated against because of the colour of their skin: black people are refused a vote in the land of their birth; working men live in massive all-male compounds whilst their families are banished to arid "homelands"; black "illegal" city dwellers live in shanty towns of cardboard and plastic, that are bulldozed every morning, whilst whites live in luxurious surroundings; and, even worse, South Africa is a country where blacks are arrested without trial, and where unarmed men, women and children are gunned down in the streets for daring to demand the human rights we are born with.

Struggle

AMANDLA represents, through poetry, music, drama and dance, the struggles of the black people of South Africa against white domination and aggression. That drama is now taking place, centre stage, in the theatre of world affairs. To adapt a phrase from Shakespeare: 'all the world's a stage and we all must play a part'. And we all can play a part, in ridding the world of the most abhorrent regime since Hitler's Nazi Germany - this was the clear message of Dali Tambo to the people of Wester Hailes.

Dali Tambo is tour manager of AMANDLA, who are about to undertake a British and European tour



(look out for the single record they hope to release later this year). He is also the son of Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC who, like AMANDLA, is in political exile from the land of his birth. Before leaving South Africa, Oliver Tambo was a lawyer who practised in partnership with Nelson Mandela the jailed ANC leader who is the focal point for much world wide and South African protest.

Support

Was Dali aware, I asked, that Edinburgh had an

'Ordinary people can help with a total boycott of South African goods'

and the people of Scotland are firmly anti-apartheid. So any demonstration of that reinforces the struggle inside our country and makes our people feel much stronger."

What did Dali think of the arguments put forward by some people, for example Malcolm Rifkind (our MP and government minister with responsibility for

historical, your son and your daughter, may be free and enjoy the same human rights that people all over the world expect and are born with, then to say that we're worried about losing a job or

'International solidarity is so fundamental to our struggle'

saying to leaders of governments is: listen to our

'The call for sanctions is the only peaceful way of undermining apartheid'

people, listen to the leadership of our people and take your decisions on that basis; not on the basis of your own mean financial interest, or on the interest of the white regime, but in the interest of the whole people of that country, because, in the end, they are the people who are going to rule that country."

The ANC has been opposing apartheid for decades now. Nelson

"There are interests," he explained, "that govern certain countries who want to protect their financial profits in South Africa, but this happened with slavery too - it was a very profitable thing."

No Vendetta

"But to answer your question. Yes! Definitely we see an end to apartheid, and we're determined it will end. We're looking forward to a free and democratic South Africa and what makes us certain of that is that the ANC is not coming back on a vendetta; it is not coming back, as it could do,

'We're looking forward to a free and democratic South Africa...The ANC is not coming back on a vendetta'

saying to the white people of South Africa, 'Now we're going to do to you what you've been doing to us'. What we're saying is that we are in favour of a free, united, one South Africa in which there is majority rule, in which there is one man, one vote, in which there is democracy."

That situation manifestly does not exist at the present. What can the ordinary person in Wester Hailes, sitting watching the daily atrocities on their TV screen - school children being chased with batons and whips, church leaders being arrested for following the Gospel and unarmed people being gunned down in the street - do to alleviate this situation? Does it, for example, help to boycott South African goods in the supermarket? "It makes a tremendous difference," Dali enthused, "ordinary people can help with the total boycott of South African goods. Another way creative people can help is by using their creativity; just as AMANDLA does. If you are an artist, use your art; if you are a singer, use your songs; if you are a poet, use your poetry to bring about the end of this evil system. Creativity is a powerful weapon. Finally, ordinary people can help us by calling on their Government and their MP's to express their disgust and total abhorrence of apartheid."

Action

Our MP, Malcolm Rifkind is Mrs Thatcher's minister in charge of South African affairs, all those who oppose apartheid should write to him now (Malcolm Rifkind, MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA) instructing him to apply economic sanctions to South Africa NOW. ("France, our partners in the 'Auld Alliance' have already imposed sanctions). This is the part we can play in helping the people of South Africa to gain their human rights. After all we live in a democracy and Malcolm Rifkind is our representative - our opinions count - we must let them be known.

Colin Bartie

SANCTIONS NOW APARTHEID MUST END

official anti-apartheid policy? "Yes. And we are greatly encouraged by that. It gives us a feeling of tremendous warmth to come to a city that has demonstrated that it is anti-apartheid. The attitude of the people of Edinburgh, in general, has been one of support for our cause and we are very conscious that we have a lot of support amongst the less well-off of this city - we realise that the

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centre of the city is not the real city."

Dali went on to explain that anti-apartheid protests give great encouragement to his people back home; through this "they understand that Great Britain is not just the government of this country; the people of Great Britain

South Africa) that sanctions would hurt the blacks more than it would help them? "What amazes us is that some of the same people who are expressing concern for the welfare of black South Africans are the very same people who have all this time been investing in the slavery of the people of South Africa. Not only that, but our people have taken a decision, without Thatcher, without Reagan, that they are going to fight apartheid. They are going to end apartheid in their lifetime. And that decision has been taken on the streets - with blood - facing guns with stones."

Sacrifice

"Therefore," went on Dali with great feeling, "when you are already making that kind of sacrifice - with your life - so that a future

whatever! A job, in comparison to your freedom, means nothing."

Dali Tambo was quite clear that, ultimately, only the people of South Africa can free South Africa but he did believe that economic sanctions and international solidarity were of immense importance. He explained: "Our struggle is on three different levels; we have the level of internal mass action; we have the level of armed struggle; and we have the level of solidarity and support, and that international solidarity is so fundamental to our struggle."

Sanctions

"The call for sanctions - which is the only peaceful way, even at this stage, of undermining apartheid - will save a lot of lives in the inevitable blood bath that there is going to be in our country. So what we are

Mandela, their acknowledged leader, has been in

'We've won the moral battle'

prison for 23 years. Does Dali think that they are any nearer today in achieving their goal of one man one vote in a united free South Africa? "Definitely. We're in a revolutionary situation, there's no doubt about that. We're in a stage now when we've won the moral battle, we've won the ideological battle, we've won the hearts

'The whole international community is against apartheid'

and minds battle. In a revolution, once you've won the hearts and minds of the people, then basically it's a matter of time. The whole international community is against apartheid."