

Chapter 6

Reflective Memories: A Chronicle of the Liberation Struggle Experiences of Comrade Rae Pillay, a South African *uMkhonto we Sizwe* Female Soldier of Indentured Indian Diasporic Heritage

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Abstract

Reflective memories shared during oral history interviews serve to rewrite a country's history, especially if the respondent was an active and involved armed forces participant during the liberation struggle for freedom – in this instance – the freedom of South Africa. Reflective memories add value to qualitative studies as new and undocumented information is communicated in a trusted milieu. The case study approach is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. For this paper, the complex issue being considered is the liberation struggle. The case-study approach is an established research design whereby the general purpose is (a) to describe an individual situation, e.g. a person (in this instance, the respondent identified is Rajaluxmi Pillay *aka* Rajes or Cde Rae Pillay, with the *nom du plume* of Maadhu); (b) identify the key issue of the case (in this instance, her contribution to the liberation struggle); and (c) to either analyse the case using relevant theoretical concepts or, alternatively, the researcher recording the contents of the interview unmediated, that does not analyse, mediate or interpret them, but rather present these reflective memories thematically. The latter option of presenting the reflective memories in an accredited publication format is selected. In an oral history interview with Cde Ivan Pillay, he attested that Cde Rae is one of only two known South African *uMkhonto we Sizwe* female soldiers of indentured Indian diasporic heritage.

Keywords: Apartheid, Indenture, Indian diaspora, liberation struggle, military wing of *uMkhonto we Sizwe*, South African Indian

1 Introduction

This article chronicles the story of Cde Rae Pillay in her capacity as a military wing soldier who fought for liberation under atrocious South African apartheid conditions. The aim of this article is to highlight the tenacity of Cde Rae, born on 4 August 1944 to Mr and Mrs TVR Pillay, by narrating her story with the searchlight focused firmly on her reflective memories. She soldiered on in her commitment to the armed political struggle, despite her serious later disability.

The broader reason for engaging further research on this protagonist is to focus on the contribution of the female descendant of the indentured Indian labourers to the Colony of Natal. The primary reason for this research is to chronicle the episodes experienced by Cde Rae, a South African of indentured Indian heritage who made the choice to fight the inequalities that she and the non-white communities experienced. This paper depicts the fight she fought – initially as a grassroots worker – and then later as an armed liberation fighter on the run. When the brutal state authorities identified her as a struggle fighter, she was informed by the struggle leadership that she needed to exit the country and go underground. Cde Rae was an *uMkhonto we Sizwe* soldier and is currently identified as one of two South African women of Indian heritage who fought the struggle as an underground soldier (Pillay 2021).

British history records that the *Slavery Abolition Act* was gazetted in 1833. In order for the British empire to survive economically and to replace that system of cheap labour, Britain looked to her colonies for this available workforce. India, being one of the jewels in the British crown, seemed like a country whose population would suit the need of its imperial master. On 16 November 1860, the first batch of these labourers landed in the Port of Natal, South Africa. They lived under colonial rule in their new home, but chose not to return to India after the period of indenture was over. Their descendants lived and worked under various political regiments, the most dehumanising and treacherous system being apartheid.

Eighty-three years after the first batch of indentured Indian labourers arrived in South Africa, Cde Rae was born on 4 August 1944 in Pietermaritzburg, but grew up in Kimberley in the Northern Cape. Her dad, T.V.R. Pillay, had five daughters when his wife died whilst being pregnant with the sixth. He

was a man of indentured Indian heritage from the Tamil-speaking community. After his wife's death, he remarried and Cde Rae's mother hailed from Pietermaritzburg. Cde Rae was one of eight children and her parents worked really hard in that community to raise them. Cde Rae's sisters met their partners by arranged marriages and were even married off from the age of 16. Her parents ran a fresh produce business in Kimberley. The Pillay's supplied the local markets and this was extremely difficult as the Afrikaner market master gave them a very difficult time with prices and with the business. For the researcher, personally, what was interesting is the fact that there was this Indian community living in an Afrikaner stronghold and they made a success of being there during the fifties and sixties. Initially, the interview revolved around Cde Rae and her early years growing up in Kimberley. Her earliest memories of the area were interesting. She recalled that there was a Hindu temple in the area and all weddings, festivals such as Deepavalli (a festival of lights) and religious activities took place here. It was a meeting place and all gathered to help with whatever needed to be done, e.g. such as making fresh flower garlands to adorn the bridal couple and/or used to beautify the temple and the statues that were inside. Ladies gathered to make sweetmeats (savoury and sweet tasting, mainly sugar-coated edibles) which are tasty Indian desserts that were handed out to friends and family. Communal living meant that all helped, attended and participated. These gatherings were happy times, but they were far and few in between as this was a very small Indian community. Of interest, though, was, 'How did this community arrive here?' It was established that the diamond mines were an attraction and this resulted in South Africans of Indian origin venturing here and then becoming a part of a multiracial community where even the Chinese had set up home.

2 Literary Review

Across the globe, there is sparse but available literature on Indian indenture-ship. Not all the stories, experiences and episodes are recorded even though many national and international researchers and writers have written extensively on different aspects of Indian indenture. The South African History Online (SAHO 2019a) portal does have some historical documentation about Rajes Pillay. However, the literature review revealed that there is a severe lack of information, documentation and academic research on female South African armed wing liberation struggle activists of indentured Indian ancestry. South

African Indian women took their place in the resistance struggle and even though the exiled veteran MK comrade played her part and sacrificed to ensure they delivered, the Indian lady in her sari (a 7-metre length of material – wrapped/ draped around a woman's body) walked the distance and that resistance gave momentum and support to the liberation struggle as a democratic South Africa was envisioned. This venture of looking at what a South African comrade of indentured Indian origin has contributed in terms of the liberation struggle and life in exile was as interesting to research as it was to compile it into an academic article.

The South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was founded by John Langalibalele Dube (1912). According to SAHO (2019b), the constitution of the SANNC had several basic aims, centred around defending and uplifting the Black people of South Africa. In 1923, this organisation, SANNC, became known as the African National Congress (ANC). An oral history interview was conducted with Cde Rae – a female comrade who was a card-carrying member of the African National Congress – initially on 18 September 2012 at her Reservoir Hills home. Women in most societies throughout the world, over time, have been involved in struggle issues. Indian women in South Africa are not new to this phenomenon and women in general 'as a group, are specially targeted to get involved in specific protest campaigns while special upliftment programmes were also initiated to improve their positions' (Clarkson 1997).

As there are limited academic works on this aspect available, this article attempts to answer some of the questions regarding the information on the topic of female South African Indian contributions to the armed wing of the liberation struggle by reflecting on the story of Cde Rae.

3 Thematic Concepts

The following concepts are referred to in the article as the themes revolve around them. The researcher provides her understanding of these concepts as they apply to the article.

3.1 Indenture

Indentured labour was not free labour. The workers who, either voluntarily or involuntarily went to distant places had no right to a negotiated wage or to the

choice of employment and the category of work. The regulated movement of indentured workers from the Indian sub-continent to the Colony of Natal was abolished in 1911 after the Indian government legislated this into an Act.

3.2 South African Indian

The term ‘South African Indian’ refers to South African citizens whose ancestry dates back to the period of colonisation and Indian indenture. They proudly see themselves as South Africans, born on African soil, but at the same time, those who follow Indian traditional customs, celebrate certain Indian religious festivals and dress accordingly. The Indian community is a blended, multi-cultural community, as elements of other cultures are prevalent within the parameters of the South African Indian life.

3.3 Military wing of *uMkhonto we Sizwe*

uMkhonto we Sizwe is the military wing of the African National Congress. It was disbanded post the new dispensation that was negotiated to bring about democracy in South Africa.

4 Methodology

A qualitative case study is a detailed study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organisation or phenomenon and is often used in historical, social and educational research. Collective contributions add value, content and knowledge to change the trajectory of history when attempts are made at rewriting a country’s history, in particular, post-colonialism and post other political systems. In terms of rewriting South African history, research into a number of political and social systems are required. For this paper the focus is on the political ideology of apartheid and the armed liberation struggle while the South African Indian diaspora as a result of Indentureship is briefly referred to as the interviewee was of indentured Indian heritage. Reflective memory lends itself to portraying issues of the political struggle as experienced by the interviewee.

This article includes the contents of the oral history interview, discussions as well as written contributions that were incorporated from Dr.

Sinithi Qono, a liberation and freedom struggle activist. The case study qualitative approach is used to chronicle reflective memories and these findings are presented here in a thematic context.

Two examples where reflective memories were used in this paper are, (a) a local community-based ex-freedom fighter sharing her personal memories; and (b) assembled written knowledge related to the freedom movement attained from a South African female of Indian heritage who reflected on her interactions with Cde Rae and then provided some points of action in terms of the way forward. Such contributions call for qualitative case study methods that shape the production of new knowledge and lend interpretation for future generations. These examples of oral – literate based conceptions of history and heritage facilitated through qualitative orality – literacy approaches increases awareness of the value of these and other alternative approaches.

Using oral history, qualitative and case study methodology, it was possible for the researcher to investigate what a unique Indian female in South Africa had experienced, politically, during the struggle years, especially from the 1960s until she returned from exile in the 1990s. She went into exile, underwent underground training, carried an MK47. Cde Rae was almost killed by a hand grenade. In terms of the case study methodology, Dr Sinti Qono, a Verulam resident and retired lecturer in Journalism (Durban University of Technology), was approached in 2012 by the researcher as to who would be a suitable candidate for this research on Indian women who went into exile during the liberation years. Dr Sinthi Qono is the sister of Cde Paul David and Cde Phyllis Naidoo who were known activist liberation fighters who made immense sacrifices for a free and democratic South Africa. During the early 60s, Dr Qono left South Africa with a passport, lived and worked in many countries during her time in exile and returned post-1990 whilst the new dispensation was being negotiated. Dr Qono identified Cde Rae Pillay as a suitable respondent for this research. As a qualitative study, Cde Rae, a surviving MK soldier, had her legendary, yet simple story to tell. Her reflective memories are presented unmediated in a thematic format. She was able to triangulate the relevance and value of historical practices and principles that gives credence to its relationship with the liberation struggle. The researcher prepared an open-ended questionnaire beforehand. This research instrument was used to gain insightful information in terms of her experiences during the struggle times. The duration of the interview was not predetermined. The interviews were not tape recorded, as the respondent was satisfied with answering questions and the researcher

writing them down. The researcher chose not to tape record the interview as she was not sure about the reaction of the respondent as the interview was centred around liberation politics. The researcher felt that this could be sensitive, especially if the veteran remembered the painful memories.

5 Interpretation of Results

The respondent provided her reflections on her own life, and the researcher recorded them in this article unmediated, that is, not analysing, mediating or interpreting them. In terms of the interpretation of the results, a noninterpretative, thematic approach has been used in this research. These unmediated reflections are, however, organised under various themes. These themes have been further explored under sub-themes and presented under Appendix 1, titled, Reflective memories of Cde Rae Pillay.

6 Conclusion

What saddened Cde Rae as she reflected on the country during the interview is that especially from the sixties to the nineties, the rate of crime and all atrocities committed against mainly women and vulnerable young children as well as fraud and corruption in our democracy had escalated. She believed that this was never the culture of the ANC and was appalled by what was happening. Cde Rae's vision was that we should become united as a South African population. The barriers to this at the moment are the crime, corruption, lack of resources and the world recession. This conclusion informs how Cde Rae felt upon returning to the country in 1990. The curtain comes down – 2020, speaks about her demise and finally Heritage Month – 2021, shares information about a publication in honour of Cde Rae Pillay.

Post-Apartheid South Africa

Upon returning to post-Apartheid South Africa, she found that the country had changed so much. Technological innovations were a part of everyday life. She adjusted to life back home by being a part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). She lived at her home in Reservoir Hills until 2020, until she was admitted to a frail care centre for assisted living. Post the passing of

Cde Rae Pillay on 29 December 2020, numerous informal conversational discourses and formal brainstorming sessions were held between the researcher and Dr Sinthi Qono, who proposed the idea of an online publication on the contributions of Cde Rae.

The Curtain Comes Down – 2020

When she became ill and needed assisted care, she was moved to a care facility where some of her close family and friends visited, when possible. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, visitors were not encouraged. She was always happy to see and meet her family and friends until her death on 29 December 2020.

Heritage Month – 2021

As a tribute to her life, during 2021, Kogie Archary, Indu Moodley and Sinthi Qono compiled a publication titled, *Beyond Borders From Swaraj to Swaziland, Rajes Pillay's journey from exile to freedom*, which was submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The publication was launched on 25 September 2021, using a virtual platform. Due to its objective relevance, the Introduction and Conclusion with reasons for why the publication was compiled, as authored by Dr Sinthi Qono in *Beyond Borders From Swaraj to Swaziland, Rajes Pillay's journey from exile to freedom*, have been included in this paper, but due to copyright infringement rules and regulations appears in Appendix 2.

Synopsis by Sinthi Qono

Sinthi Qono submitted the following write-up, which concluded the online publication.

Preserving our struggle history is an activity of the Arts. It is history in the making. In preserving our struggle history, we are recognising the processes of concrete development which took and take place in our country. These developments started from time immemorial, but more recently, in our country, it would be 1654 when the first recorded Europeans are said to have entered what is today called the Cape Province. The writing of the history of colonial wars between 1654 to legalised apartheid has been undertaken by many historians. These must be put in line with our written and recorded anti-

apartheid and anti-imperialist works. There are also written and technological recordings on the mechanisms of the apartheid regime, its atrocities and its close alliance with imperialism and other western capitalist states. This must also have its place in the preservation of our history so that it is never forgotten just as much as the NAZI atrocities, the worst of its kind in the last century, in Europe must never be forgotten.

The soldiers of *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), the fighters in exile and inside the country, are the most recent of our struggle fighters making history in our country. Many are known and many are unknown.

There is no conclusion to our history, nor to world history, because there is no end to social consciousness and human activity. Underlying these concepts is the socio-economic structure of each and every society, of which many a thesis has been written and will continue to be written. The myths and deities in the different Greek states around the 9th century BC were integrated into a loosely coherent system and remembered through festivals and observances. They held a powerful attraction and were worshipped throughout Greece for centuries. At this very early stage of our world history, we witness humanity preservation deified heroes for centuries. Around the 4th century AD, Christian Emperors closed down these shrines. However, up to modern times, a few Greek saints retain some attributes of bygone deities. Similarly, all religions of the world had and still have their coherent systems of worship. The heroes and villains of over 2 000 years ago are preserved in the Bible and handed down to mankind to this day, albeit, aided by spirituality. William Shakespeare (1556–1623) whose many all-round genres, for example, plays, poetry sonnets, comedies and tragedies are read, researched, quoted, revered and brought to life to this day. Socrates, Plato, Heraclitus and many others are household names among social scientists worldwide. These philosophers emerged many centuries BC. Similarly, the natural sciences would not be a reality without Galilee, Newton, Darwin and many others who were born from the 16th century onwards.

Human activity of bygone centuries continues and has become institutionalised, for example, the Vatican City, the papal authority, the religious states, as opposed to secular kingdoms, monarchies and other lower institutions. Much knowledge, material and spiritual values and activities as well as the means of creating, using and advancing them, without any of our modern technology available, have been handed down to mankind over millennia and centuries. This should give us incentive and encouragement to do

something far in advance of what we already have. We need to create a lasting system that would encompass our struggle history in a coherent, chronological ‘online package’. Today, one can access any information online, but what we need is something more serious and in tone with past struggles. It must be available to history learners and scholars across the class divide.

This publication has been written for the following reasons:

1. To remember, honour and keep alive the struggle history of Rajes Pillay, the great *uMkhonto we Sizwe* soldier who died on 29 December 2020.
2. To lobby for the preservation of the struggle history of all those who fought against the settlers, colonialism, and apartheid in our country.
3. To lobby for their (as in ‘2’) research in the process of their (struggles) emergence and development in connection with historical conditions determining them.
4. To contribute to our positive cultural history. On Human Rights Day, on 21 March 2021, our President Cyril Ramaphosa indicated that our country has a strong human rights culture. Hence our contribution.
5. To lobby for the creation of a chronological and coherent system to preserve our struggle history.

(Archary *et al.* 2021: 96-97)

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Competing interests

The researcher declares that she has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

Data Availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the researcher and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the researcher .

Ethical Consideration

The respondent was informed timeously of the aims and objectives of the project. She consented and it was clearly stated that the information received would be for research and academic purposes. Cde Rae was comfortable and the interview took place at her Reservoir Hills home.

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Appendix 1

Reflective Memories of Cde Rae Pillay

Arranged thematically, this section is the main body of the article and contains the unmediated reflections of Cde Rae Pillay. These themes – Northern Cape, a multi-racial community; Leaving and living in London; Rebel with a cause ... liberation struggles; Going into exile, leaving South African shores and In Africa, the Angolan Government – were identified from the interview in terms of the respondent's reflective memories and appear in *Celebration, preservation and promotion of struggle narratives with a focus on South African women of Indian heritage* (Archary & Landman 2021: 4 - 7).

Northern Cape, a Multi-racial Community

From a young age, Cde Rae was part of a multi-racial community and this is where she started becoming aware that there were differences in how people interacted with each other.

Cde Rae went to the local co-ed coloured school, which had a Christian ethos. She walked to the Perseverance Primary School with Muslim, Malay and Coloured children. During the break they were given soup that was prepared by Mrs Dudley. It was while she was a pupil here that she became aware of differences. There were Indian and African teachers and Cde Rae thereafter attended the William Prescott High School. The Indians in Kimberly became part of the Liberation Struggle, which was part of a nationwide struggle. In the mid-fifties, her father was given a 30-day permit to travel to Durban and if he was not back within the stipulated time, the Afrikaner policemen were waiting for him. Cde Rae, at that point, around 11 or 12 years of age, started hating them, as she could see and experience what they were doing. In 1961 the Chinese were given white status. They could now freely travel to Stellenbosch and other areas but Indians were not permitted to do so. Dr Letele, who was a recognised face in the unity movement during the fifties, worked very closely with her father and this was the reason that he was targeted by the security forces. They had many visitors to their home and their house was a hive of activity. Many prominent politicians visited and even stayed over. The senior Mrs Pillay prepared food and entertained, as this household became a meeting place for comrades passing by. This hospitality was extended to all in the struggle. The Muslim taxi operator, Nordine, transported the visitors to and

from the homes of the different activists. Cde Rae and her siblings were a part of this, as they had to give up their beds and sleep on apple boxes in order to put up the comrades (Archary & Landman 2021: 4 - 5).

Leaving and Living in London

In 1958, Cde Rae left for London.

Reflecting on the past, memories that come to mind are some of the decisions that they took. Cde Rae was 13 when her father died. Her mother had to take charge of the family and the business. It was very difficult, especially in those times. It was decided that Cde Rae and her brother would travel with their mother to England. They lived there for three years. She completed her post-high school education in London. While she and her mother were in London, they met Dr Yusuf Dadoo. Mrs Pillay was a professional in the Tamil language, which she taught for a short while in the International Language School in Kensington, London. However, due to no formal school education, Mrs Pillay did not enjoy this stint there and left, returning to South Africa with her son. In 1963, Cde Rae was 19 and studying towards her A levels. In London, student meetings were held in her flat. She met Brian Bunting, who had emigrated around the same time. He was the editor of *Seshaba*, a magazine of struggle literature. In London she felt the ‘international impact’ of apartheid, especially when she went to Foyle’s Bookstore. In 1967, she returned to South Africa. She wanted to use and continue her education and became a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC) of the Natal Campus. She had ‘foreign student’ status. Cde Rae was friends with Paul David’s sister, Phyllis Naidoo. She was married to MD Naidoo, whose individual and combined contribution must be remembered. Coincidentally, Paul David and Phyllis Naidoo are Sinthi Qono’s siblings (Archary & Landman 2021:5).

Rebel with a Cause ... Liberation Struggles

Cde Rae was a revolutionary and she befriended many liberation activists during her time in exile.

Cde Rae became friends with Abdul Khalek Docrat, who was an immigrant from Rangoon in Malaysia, and it was during these times that she became aware of the ‘mechanics’ of what took place. She engaged in reading

and together with George Sewpersadh they got books from the outside to promote literary studies in liberation struggles. From 1967 to 1972, she worked for Republic Bank where she unionised staff. However, there was very little that the unions could do at that time, as they were not as powerful as they are today. Docrat, who was with the National Union of Distributive Workers worked with her. In 1972, she worked for Game and despite her workmanship she was overlooked for promotion because ‘she was very political’. She spoke to staff at different levels about what was happening in the country. Eventually she left Game to work for a bottle store. It was while she was here that the security forces followed her because they had records of her from her student days. She was now instructed by the ANC to leave this job or be faced with imprisonment. She left. During this period, she was an underground cadre in touch with the ANC. The ANC was in need of certain logistical support and she was sent money via a courier. One of the couriers later turned out to be a spy. During 1974 and 1975, she was introduced to the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference. At this time, she met Sam Moodley, Leela Pillay and GR Naidoo, who was editor of the *Post*. She came into contact with Reuben Philips, a senior Anglican Church leader, as it was believed that the church could and should help. She became involved in raising money for the ‘affected people’ as comrades were called and she completed other work that was assigned to her. She worked with Ebrahim Ebrahim, Mac Maharaj, Sunny Singh, Poomani Moodley and Tim Naidoo, to name just a few. She was tasked with getting press releases for the activists who had been released from jail as Cde Rae was in contact with the *Leader* and *Graphic* newspapers (Archary & Landman 2021:6).

Going into Exile, Leaving South African Shores

In 1979, in the cold of night, Cde Rae left our South African shores.

As she reflected, what came to her mind was ‘fear’ as she recounted the days to her leaving. She just got ‘the call’ in 1979 to leave. She and her accomplice arrived at the meeting place only to find blaring sirens of the police. She now found herself on the run again and was forced into hiding. Two weeks later they left with no clothing or food, except for two oranges. They managed to get a lift with a furniture removal truck, which took them safely to the border. She vividly remembers that around 2:00 am they were scared and tired as they passed the Pongola border, which was a common border. They hid underneath the furniture and arrived at their destination only to find that the car that was

meant to pick them did not pitch. They had to walk and she admits she was lucky to be alive at the end of it, because if you were spotted you were shot by the Swazi defence police. It was a 12-hour walk from the Swaziland border to Manzini. The difficulty was that there was no water, no food and no protection from the elements. They walked through the rain. They walked and walked over the koppies and hills, not knowing if they would reach their destination and her companion did mention, 'Well if we don't make it, at least we tried'. It was a treacherous path that they walked but her conviction was strong. Upon arriving in Manzini she made contact with Comrade Stanley Mabizela of the ANC and he attended to matters. She reported to the police station and was questioned by officers. Her photographs were taken. She could not say much, as any information ventured by her would be used to the detriment of the struggle. She stated that she was harassed by the South African Security Service and was 'wanted by the police' and needed refugee status. It was granted, but she was advised that being an Indian female she would be better off if she stayed at the mission station where there were other Indians. She moved in, even though only men were living there. Here she met Joe Pillay, Ivan Vis Pillay and Krish Rabilall. It was very difficult as there was neither special food nor attention. Cde Rae met Bishop Zwane of the SA Council of Churches Leadership and he introduced her to Moses Mahbida, who found her a job for R80 a month in Swaziland. While she was in Swaziland she was involved in refugee counselling amongst other tasks. Her family travelled to where she was living for her wedding. She was involved fulltime in ANC work. She was paid enough to get by and while in exile she worked with Shadrack Maphumulo and Judson Khuzwayo. She was part of the refugee committee. In 1981, she was instructed to leave for Angola for military training and when that training was completed she returned to Swaziland (Archary & Landman 2021:6).

In Africa, the Angolan Government

According to Cde Rae,

In 1983 ... I was deployed to fight against the forces of the Angolan opposition political movement, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) on the Eastern Front, at a time when UNITA was in political and military alliance with the South African Defence Force.

Further to this, she stated that,

... during the course of these operations, many MK troops came to the conclusion that no serious struggles were taking place in South Africa and that their lives were being wasted in Angola in a civil war. They wanted to be sent back to South Africa to fight. When they demanded a national conference of the ANC to discuss this and other issues, including their demand for democratic elections for the ANC's national executive committee, this was not accepted by the leadership, headed by O.R. Tambo.

Cde Rae was a part of the struggle, where the Angolan people, unlike the Portuguese colonists, positioned their offence on three fronts (SAHO 2019c). Cde Rae mentioned that 'the Angolan government was at the heart of the struggle'. When she had an accident, she returned to Angola for treatment. Here she was admitted to the Cuban station, and under them, she was in the special unit organisation for women – it was a treatment centre, as they were in a 'war situation'. Her hand was becoming gangrenous and she mentioned, 'I lifted my arm up in Amandla stance, with fist clenched and asked for my hand to be saved'. She was in this Cuban unit in Angola for six months and even though her hand was saved, the scars are still visible. In 1985, the situation became rigorous in Swaziland with the bombs attacks and there was a fear that people like Cde Rae, who had refugee status, may be targeted, as it was feared that they may be shot. She left Swaziland in 1985, as many refugees were withdrawing because of the situation there. The Mozambique-Inkomati Accord was signed and the bargaining chip was the ANC (SAHO 2019a). She was in Zambia from 1985 to 1990. Whilst here she was unemployed. She met other refugees who had been in exile for much longer. She did voluntary work for the ANC such as attending meetings, welfare work, collecting money and distributing food and clothing (Archary & Landman 2021:7).

Appendix 2

Online Publication

Beyond Borders from Swaraj to Swaziland, Rajes Pillay's Journey from Exile to Freedom (Archary et al. 2021).

Introduction

The unsung hero is a cliché and like most clichés we do not ponder over their meanings. Unsung hero has a philosophical setting. History is all the more fragile and weaker if there are too many unsung heroes. Let us establish what is required to be a 'sung' hero.

World War II resulted in the loss of 25 to 27 million soldiers and others in the former Soviet Union (USSR). Ravaged by the war and still in the infancy of socialism, it would have been a tall order to ask the USSR to honour each and every soldier lost in the war, not even counting the unknown perished lives. The African National Congress (ANC), without much in its pocket, became the first ruling post-apartheid South African party. Given the fact that the resources of the country during apartheid were shared among 4 million people (pittance to the homelands and to other minorities), and now had to be shared among 50 million people, it would be a great challenge for the ANC to honour its fighters as the party would have wanted to.

In Algeria, another unspeakable colonial tragedy took place. The country lost over one and a half million of its people, around 20 per cent of its population at that time. In a similar planned takeover of South Africa, the French had considered Algeria as one of its provinces. This was one of the bloodiest colonial wars. From where and how do we start honouring heroes; children, women, families, soldiers (FLN – *Front de Liberation Nationale*)?

One more example would be Vietnam. The entire country was not only riddled with bombs and bullets, but by Napalm, which killed and continues to kill many of the country's population. The country and the region continue to this day to ask for assistance to clear their land of these bombs, etc. Many more examples over the centuries, raging on to this day can be mentioned. In other words, what a nation can do for its unsung heroes is finally determined by its economic relations.

Was Rajes an unsung hero? Her fellow combatants, friends and others will disagree. They cherished and loved her and considered her as one of our greatest heroes. Those unknown to her, perhaps scholars researching the anti-

apartheid struggle, would not know that there was a Rajes in the struggle. Yet, towards our struggle history, Rajes had contributed to numbers, being a soldier of *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), the military wing of the ANC; she added value to MK; she was one of few who was prepared to carry a gun; she was prepared to fight not only the white minority regime in South Africa, but also the might of imperialism; Rajes contributed positively to our history.

History is a philosophical category which portrays the process of development. It is cast in stone, written, recited and everything else which modern technology, miraculously, brings with it. It is also carried down through commemoration, celebrations, honouring not only struggle activists but also successful entrepreneurs, scientists, sportsmen and women, entertainers and many more. They contribute to our development, to our history. Rajes, thanks to the Satyagraha Awards, was awarded for her honourable contribution to our struggle against apartheid. Rajes earned herself the country's special pension which made it possible for her to live a comfortable life.

Together with her fallen and fellow fighters, Rajes did not want to be rewarded. That was not in their will, their character. From where then did the cliché 'unsung hero' originate? They did not want to be 'sung'. The majority of our fighters fought for a just state, a state that would shed the shackles of colonialism, neo-colonialism and apartheid. That did not happen.

The laws of connection and interaction of the global playing field took centre stage. After 1989, our fighters were sorely disappointed with these historical events. It affected, detrimentally, the hopes and dreams of all progressive forces to this day. The balance of forces had tilted in favour of reaction. Rajes was no exception. She was prepared to go back into exile and fight against reaction. The plight of the unsung hero worsened. Socialism had retreated.

History uncovers the general laws of knowledge. Recognising and recording our unsung heroes would create the basis of this knowledge. Further, derived from this historical process would be the logical development of our thought and overall consciousness.

Rajes is a hero. Together with others, she planted a tree, the fruit of which we eat today. Albeit the fruit are somewhat rotten; we hope the tree will soon recover. Rajes often wondered why after two decades and more of our democracy, children still use pit toilets at school, including primary schools. The positive economic road which we had chosen in 1994 changed for the worse after a few years. The National Democratic Revolution became blurred. This

meant that a few years into the millennium to date, our economic and social development plummeted, aggravated severely now, by the pandemic. These situational forces brought much trauma to Rajes who had regularly voiced her opinion. This trauma affected our entire country, region and continent.

Every economic and social formation has its corresponding material and technical basis. Our country has many natural, particularly mineral resources which could feed into this basis or requirement. With our small- and medium-scale enterprises and with our own resources, a start can be made. Not doing this in a centrally planned and organised manner will result in failure. This is what Rajes fought for. Imagine electrifying the entire country without a centrally planned programme! Small and medium enterprises must engage in a comprehensive mechanisation of the production processes leading to positive automation. Physics and chemistry must be encouraged at schools so that learners use this knowledge for the development of our national economy to bring it to a higher and modern level. In other words, Rajes and her fellow fighters believed in a path of development which would ultimately lead to a system with no unemployment, no hunger, proper housing for all and a society with a caring and progressively educated world outlook. Solomon Mahlangu was hanged on 6 April 1979 by the apartheid regime. He reportedly said the following:

Tell my people I love them and that they must continue the fight, my blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruit of freedom. *Aluta continua!*

(Archary *et al.* 2021: 6-7).

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