



TRIBUTE TO AHMED KATHRADA



Ahmed Kathrada (Source: <http://www.wfuv.org>)

By *Ben Turok*

Whenever I think of Ahmed Kathrada I cannot avoid recalling the stormy 1950s when the ANC became a mass movement. His personality, of fearlessness and public spiritedness, was so much part of the mood of the times- of the Defiance Campaign, the Congress of the People, Freedom Charter, Treason Trial, Sophiatown removals and so many more mass campaigns.

Unfortunately his activities were brought to halt by the Rivonia Trial when he and others were sentenced to life. Thus began many years of campaigning here and internationally for their release which was ignored for so long by the apartheid government.

It was a strange period in which Mandela and his comrades had to endure immense deprivation and overt humiliation. Yet it was the very manner in which they endured their punishment that released waves of solidarity around the world.

Prison was no place for opposition to authority and yet retaining personal dignity and insisting on the basic rights of all prisoners are necessary.

It was in this environment that Kathrada developed a new maturity and depth of thought. His letters reveal an inner calm, a contemplative trait which was so evident on his release. For some years he chose to stay in the background supporting

Mandela as he prepared to take on national leadership and then as President. I met Kathy on several occasions and he seemed quite fulfilled in that role. No one anticipated the kind of profound address he delivered at the Mandela funeral. It was as if he had found new strength and a new mission.

In the last few years of his life of extraordinary sacrifice he found it necessary to speak out against wrongdoing at the highest levels of the state. We shall cherish those remarks forever as the moral high ground by a man who had seen the depths of humanity.

May we all rise to play our part in rebuilding that moral high ground. **NA**